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# TWENTY

# SERMONS

BY THE LATE

REV. HENRY MARTYN, B.D.

FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE;

AND CHAPLAIN OF THE HON. THE EAST-INDIA COMPANY ON THE BENGAL ESTABLISHMENT.

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# PREFACE.

One only of the Sermons in this Volume—the last, entitled "Christian India"—was intended for publication, and was printed during the Author's lifetime. The first ten were preached on successive Sundays, at the Old Church in Calcutta, in the latter end of 1810, just before his final departure from Bengal. Those which follow have been selected from a parcel of his Manuscript Sermons in the possession of the Author's friends: these were preached (as appears from their superscriptions) at various periods of his Ministry.

The Editors hope that the writings of one, who so peculiarly devoted himself to the work of God in this country, may be blessed to the diffusion of those principles and the nurture

of those affections, by which alone Missionary Labours can be sustained. *The love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again* (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). Animated by these principles, Martyn pursued his course. May a double portion of his spirit rest on all who follow him in the same wide field of labour!

The desire to know how such a man preached, is natural and unavoidable. It will be here gratified, so far as respects the style and usual strain of his compositions. His manner in the pulpit was distinguished by a holy solemnity, always suited to the high message which he was delivering, and accompanied by an unction which made its way to the hearts of his audience. With this was combined a fidelity, at once forcible by its justice and intrepidity, and penetrating by its affection. There was, in short, a power of holy love and disinterested earnestness in

his addresses, which *commended itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

It is hoped that these Sermons will be read with the indulgence usually granted to posthumous works. Though they want the fine polish which they might have received from the Author's chaste and accurate pen, if they had been revised by himself for publication, the Editors are persuaded that they will be read with lively interest; and they send forth this Volume, earnestly praying that the Author, *though dead*, may yet hereby *speak* with power to many; and that the great Head of the Church may graciously crown the perusal of these Discourses with His blessing.

[*Extracted from the Preface to the First Edition printed at Calcutta.*]

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# SERMON I.

## ON THE ATONEMENT.

HEBREWS IX. 22.

*Without shedding of blood is no remission.*

THE confession of mankind respecting their need of forgiveness, though in most cases not arising from such deep conviction as to lead them to seek pardon, is, however, so general, and the acknowledgment made so readily, that instead of detaining you with proofs of our universal sinfulness, we shall for the present take it for granted.

The opinions of men on the WAY of obtaining pardon, are far from being so agreeable to each other, or to the truth. That great source of ignorance, our fancied knowledge, is one cause of their mistake; and want of a thorough persuasion of their guilt and danger, makes them remiss in their inquiries about the way to escape from it. Their natural depravity also makes them averse to any consideration of a

religious nature; and even when the SCRIPTURE is consulted for information on this subject, men often bring their own notions and prejudices along with them. In this way, the doctrine of the Gospel appears obscure.

I. It shall be our endeavour to state the truth as it is revealed, and we must begin with REMOVING ERROR.

*Without shedding of blood is no remission.*—Now as there are many modes of remission or forgiveness passing current among Christians, different from the one in the text, we must examine their nature and prove their inefficacy.

1. The first, and most general way is, that "GOD IS MERCIFUL, AND MAN WEAK; THEREFORE GOD WILL OVERLOOK HIS ERRORS. This, as might be expected, is the most favourite way among men, because most agreeable to their inclinations.

In the reasoning by which it is attempted to be established, we allow the premises, but deny the conclusion: we allow that God is merciful and man weak; but we deny that it follows from thence that man must be saved. For though God is merciful, and must necessarily remain so, yet our salvation is not necessary to the maintenance of his attribute of mercy:

he would not lose this attribute were we all to perish: if he would, why did he not when he destroyed the angels that sinned? No mercy was shewn to them, yet we still say, and say properly, that mercy is one of his attributes.

It is allowed that man differs from the angels in being weak; but God did not create him weak. God made man upright, in his own image: his subsequent corruption is to be ascribed to himself; and can therefore impose no obligation on God to alter his laws in order to accommodate them to man's weakness.

If it be urged that the weakness in which we are born is not owing to ourselves, we reply, That weakness is not so great as to amount to a NECESSITY of falling. What man can say with truth, concerning any of the sins which he has committed, that it was absolutely impossible for him to have avoided it? If he had avoided the temptation, or armed his mind with consideration—the fear of God and his judgements—faith in his promises and help—whose conscience does not tell him after the commission of evil, that he is HIMSELF to blame, and not his Maker? God, it is true, has given us pas sions; but it is not the use of them that constitutes sin, but the abuse of them: this abuse of them is of ourselves, and therefore God is not

chargeable with our sinful weakness: consequently no argument can be drawn from thence that he will overlook it. If any one injure us materially in our property or honour, and, while we are suffering from the aggression, should plead his weakness of resolution or the strength of his inclination to do what he has done, we should consider the excuse as inexcusable as the crime; and why we do not apply this reasoning to God, is, because we seldom think how offensive sin is to him

Our weakness, therefore, is no excuse; and if God make laws for us, and denounce punishments for the transgression and rewards for the observance of them, he does only what every wise Lawgiver on earth does, who, if he fulfil his own threatenings, is not accused of want of goodness.

It might be added, that the goodness of God would be so far from being liable to any imputation by our destruction, that it might probably be an act of GOODNESS to the rest of the creation, to PUNISH us: as a King, by putting to death a number of his people, who are nuisances to the rest by their ill conduct, consults thereby the benefit of the whole community; for the rest are taught the evil and danger of transgression, and fear to offend.

If, after all, men persist in saying, that they

can never believe that there is any hell, or that God made us to be miserable, we answer, that the same argument would go to prove that there should be no suffering in THIS LIFE neither; for this world is as much under God's government as the next: we must therefore say, upon those principles, "We shall never find any misery in the world—God is too merciful to allow it." But let us look at the world—Is there no misery, no shame, no poverty, no remorse, no disease? yes, a huge army of pains and sorrows over-run the earth, and are the consequences of men's sins—the natural, appointed, and necessary consequences. It cannot be said that these sufferings are intended only to correct us, so as to make us more careful in future; for, in all instances of CAPITAL punishments for crimes, this end cannot be answered: when a man is brought to the gallows, no one supposes that his execution is intended to make HIM better. And it must be observed, that these things take place upon earth according to the appointment of God: for such instances of punishments, where men are cut off for ever from the community, are confessedly necessary for the well-being of the whole, and are therefore agreeable to the will of God. Our inference, therefore, is, that, upon whatever principle

God is supposed too merciful to punish sin hereafter, upon the same principle it must be concluded, that he is too merciful to punish it here: which is contrary to fact.

But we were to speak of Forgiveness. We have shewn that it is impossible to suppose that God should not punish sin at all; yet since many who would allow that God will punish some, that is, the most heinous transgressors, yet suppose that the rest will be readily forgiven, we proceed one step further, and affirm, that God never forgives any in the absolute exercise of Mercy, independently of any other consideration. For Mercy cannot be exercised to the disparagement of his Truth. If therefore he has spoken any thing which is of such a nature that the exercise of mercy in pardoning would be inconsistent with it, that mode of exercising mercy cannot be admitted as possible, because it would subject the Deity to the imputation of falsehood. Now God has said, either literally or virtually, that sin shall not go unpunished: and reason, indeed, furnishes us with the same truth; for sin is the transgression against some law, and there can be no law without the sanction of punishment annexed to transgression. If, therefore, after this declaration of God, that sin shall meet its punishment, sin, through the exercise of

God's mercy find no punishment, how shall God be true?

2. The next opinion to be noticed, is, that "GOD WILL PARDON US FOR THE SAKE OF OUR REPENTANCE."

But if a debtor express his sorrow to the creditor, for having contracted the debt, and promise to incur no new debt with him hereafter, will the creditor be satisfied with this declaration? the debtor's future good conduct will be of no advantage to him: he requires payment therefore; and, in default of payment, will imprison. Or if a criminal acknowledge before a judge, his sorrow for his past offences, and promise amendment, will his acknowledgments or his promises arrest the arm of justice? by no means: the law must take its course, or it may as well be abolished. Now God is the Judge of the universe. *He sitteth upon his throne, judging right:* if therefore every sinner, for the sake of his repentance, must find pardon, disorder would as necessarily be introduced into God's moral government of the world, as it would be in human governments from the same cause.

A due consideration of this truth would tend to remove many erroneous imaginations. A father, it is allowed, pardons his child out of love to it, and a master his servant, on

account of his repentance: but God is not a father or a master only, but a Judge and a Governor. Now a poor and ignorant man, brought before a judge, often wonders why he might not as well be pardoned and liberated, especially when conscious that he should be careful to offend no more: these are his thoughts, because he is too short-sighted to look beyond himself; and to watch the distant consequences of indiscriminating lenity, in its effects on the community at large. We, in the same way, think it extremely easy, and as certain as it is easy, that God should pardon sinners for the sake of their repentance, because we consider only our own individual case: but when it is considered that God is, in the strictest sense, a Judge, as well as a father or a master, it becomes a far greater difficulty than at first sight it appears, to believe that he should pardon men for their repentance. In addition to what has been said, it may be observed, that a judge's peculiar duties are comparatively so indispensible, that a man in that situation, acting conscientiously, will punish a servant, or even his own child, whom he would have forgiven if acting only in the capacity of a master or father.

The former considerations also of the TRUTH of God, may be again referred to, in evidence

against the supposition that Repentance and Pardon are necessarily connected. It may be asked, as before, if God's Law threatens punishment for sin, and makes no provision for repentance, which it does not any more than human laws, how shall God be true if our sins go unpunished?

But here it will be asked, "Do not the Scriptures themselves say, that if we repent, we shall be saved?" Yes, because repentance is necessary to our accepting that way of pardon which God has provided: but it can no where be inferred from Scripture, that repentance is the primary cause of our pardon, or that it is of itself sufficient.

3. The third way of obtaining pardon for our offences, which we notice, is "THE WAY OF GOOD WORKS."

The followers of this way suppose, that future good works will make amends for past bad ones—that money given for charity, will atone for former extravagance—that attendance at Church and Sacrament, will make up for past profanations of Sabbaths—and that extraordinary strictness in religious duties, will work out the pardon of past remissness. This is the Popish doctrine of Works of Supererogation.

But concerning these good works which we do, it must be said, that they are either not

commanded of God, or they are: if they are not, they are unlawful and unnecessary; if they are, they are absolutely necessary to be done at every time in such a sense, that to omit doing them is a sin. All the good works that can possibly be done in any hour, with all their perfection and excellence, belong to that hour, and, consequently, the merit of them cannot be transferable, to supply the defects of another hour: to attempt to do it, is but to cover one part of the body with a garment which leaves another part naked.

One of our Saviour's arguments is in point here: *Which of you having a servant plowing, or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and bye when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat; and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me till I have eaten and drank?* After the servant has done his work in the field, the master does not think himself obliged to shew him particular kindness and indulgence, but gives him other work; and when he has finished that too, *doth he thank that servant* our Saviour asks, *because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to*

*do* (Luke xvii. 7—10): that is, "Say," and therefore know, "that if you do every possible good work, you have done no more than God commanded you; and have therefore brought no profit to God, any more than a servant, who does his appointed duty, brings any gain to his master, or lays him under an obligation."

Upon the whole, then, it appears that neither God's mercy, nor our repentance, nor our good works, can be allowed to be the way of pardon By these, there *is no remission.*

II. Yet since it is undeniable that sins may be forgiven, we are compelled to adopt the only supposition that remains. If it is indeed necessary for the sake of the truth and justice of God, that sin should be punished, and salvation consists not in our suffering, it immediately follows that SOME ONE MUST SUFFER FOR US. There seems no possible way of reconciling Mercy and Justice, Grace and Truth, but this.

Yet, here again, when we search for an Atonement, not for one sin, but for all the sins of all the human race, Reason, not informed by Revelation, must despair of succeeding in its search. For sin is an infinite evil: an offence against a fellow-creature, an equal, a superior, a king—or, again, against a friend, a brother,

a father—is, in every step, more aggravated; since the offence increases always in proportion to the dignity of the person whom we offend, and the obligations which we are under to him. Hence it must be concluded, that, since the dignity of God is infinite, and the obligations which we are under to him infinite, the wickedness of sinners against him is also infinite: therefore if we suffer for sin in hell, no finite time of suffering can be a sufficient punishment for sin: it must be for an infinite time—for eternity. On the other hand, if our sins are to be cancelled by an atonement, that atonement must be of infinite value in order to be equivalent to the evil of sin; and if the atonement be a person, that person must be of infinite dignity: but infinite dignity belongs only to God.

In this dilemma, the book of Revelation appears for our information and relief: and teaches us that the Deity exists in Three Persons, all equal; and that the Second of these, in love consented to become the atonement required, and the Father accepted it. But as an atonement for sin implied suffering for it, and the Deity is incapable of suffering, not on account of any imperfection, but of his absolute perfection, it was necessary that he should assume a nature that was capable of suffering. This might be the nature of angels or of men. It

was more proper to assume the nature of men than of angels, because the words *Thou shalt surely die* respect the human nature: therefore it was necessary that the nature which had sinned should die.

From this time, then, preparation was made for the coming of the Son of God into the world; and the promise of his incarnation from the seed of the woman was given immediately after the fall.

About this time, also, it appears that God, in order to teach man in what way he would save such, namely, not *without shedding of blood*, instituted the observance of Sacrifices. It is not, indeed, expressly said in the Book of Genesis, that God commanded this rite; but it seems extremely evident: for Abel offered a sacrifice, and was accepted in preference to Cain: but, in the New Testament, it is said, that *by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain* (Heb. xi. 4): now faith implies a divine command; for where there is no command of God, there is no place for the exercise of faith. Even before Abel, it seems most probable that Adam and Eve offered sacrifices by the divine command: for it is said that *God made them*, or prepared for them *coats of skins, and clothed them* (Gen. iii. 21): now as animal food was not allowed mankind till after

the Flood, it is not easy to say why these animals should be killed, but in sacrifices; and God's clothing them was a lively figure of their being clothed with the righteousness of Christ: they obtained it not of themselves, it was God that gave it to them; to signify, that the righteousness with which our naked souls are clothed, is not our righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God: and we may also conceive that our first parents, who, when naked, were clothed at the expense of life, might be taught by this, that the covering of the inward nakedness of the soul was to be at the expense of the life and blood—that *without shedding of blood is no remission.*

These remarks respecting sacrifices receive not a little strength, from the consideration of the acknowledged universality of the practice; from the sameness of the manner in which the whole world offered these sacrifices; and from that merit and expiation which were constantly supposed to be effected by them.

The practice has been so general, that it is probable, not a single people can be found upon earth, among whom it has not prevailed at one time or other. Nay, it is surprising to observe how general was the custom of human sacrifices, unnatural as it is: the ancient Egyp-

tians, Cretans, Arabians, Persians—the inhabitants of all the Greek and the Asiatic Islands—the Romans—the people of Gaul and Germany—all the inhabitants of the north, of whatever denomination—the Scythians—the various nations upon the Baltic—held it as a fixed principle, that their happiness and security could not be obtained, but at the expense of the lives of others. These accounts are handed down by a variety of authors in different ages, many of whom were natives of the countries which they describe: they would not, therefore, have brought so foul an imputation on the people in favour of whom they were writing, nor could there be that concurrence of testimony, were not the history in general true. The practice we full well know was prevalent in our own island in ancient times, when the forests were stained with the gore of men dying under the knife of the Druids. In modern times, it is seen to prevail: it was found in Mexico and Peru, and most parts of America: in Africa, it is still kept up in the inland parts: and, in this Heathen Country, it has been the custom, from time immemorial. There are particular directions given in their Sacred Books, for the ceremonies to be performed at the sacrifice of human victims: it is within ten years, or less, that the sacrifice of children was

prohibited by the Government; and little doubt can be entertained, that many are yearly sacrificed in the forests of Bengal.

The Manner of sacrificing animals, among all nations, has also been very similar. Both among the Jews, Greeks, and Romans, the victim was to be without blemish or imperfection; and, among the latter people, if the animal made any resistance, it was thought a bad omen. If thought fit to be offered, they confessed their sins over the victim, and then slaughtered him.

Now human reason, even among the most strenuous opponents of the Divine Institutions, is allowed to be incapable of pointing out the least natural fitness or congruity, between blood and atonement—between killing God's creatures, and receiving a pardon for the violation of God's laws: yet this effect of sacrifices, when properly offered, was the invariable opinion of the Heathen. They had also a traditionary belief among them, that their animal sacrifices were not only expiatory, but vicarious. Commutations, and substitutions, or satisfactions, being so remote from, nay, contrary to any lesson that nature teaches, as they confessedly are, it seems evident that they originated in a primitive command of God; though certainly carried to a dreadful and unscriptural

length, when extended to human sacrifices: and God has suffered the practice of sacrifice in general to continue, perhaps, that the minds of men may be accustomed to the idea of remission through blood-shedding; and thus be more ready hereafter to receive the Gospel, the preaching of which is to reveal the Great Sacrifice.

God continued to order all the affairs of providence, in subservience to the same event. All of these we cannot notice, only those which are more particularly connected with the text.

Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were regular and exact in their sacrifices; and in that remarkable instance of Abraham being called to offer up his son Isaac, a more clear intimation of what God was about to do was given, than had ever been given before. Here a FATHER was seen offering an INNOCENT SON. Moreover, the spot where the great event was to take place was pointed out: peculiar and repeated direction was given to Abraham to go to that particular mountain, and no other; and a remark is made in that Chapter of Genesis of a proverb that had arisen "*In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*" (Gen. xxii. 14.)—a tradition that would naturally lead men to expect something remarkable to take place

there. At last, God separated the family of Abraham to be a peculiar people, to shew forth, more fully than ever, what was intended to be done.

There had been many typical events, before, respecting Christ; but now, instead of a few and insulated notices, as the time approached he gives a Law, full of nothing but various and innumerable representations, by which that nation was directed, every year, month, and day, in their religious actions, and in their conduct of themselves in their ecclesiastic and civil affairs, to shew forth what was coming; one observance exhibiting one doctrine or benefit—another, another: so that the whole nation, as it were, by their singular customs, were preachers and prophets to the rest of the world. It is true that the modern Jews and the ignorant ones of old, perceive nothing more than the outside of their institutions: but it must have occurred to every thinking person among them, that mere ceremonies could not have formed acceptable services to that God who is a Spirit. There seems nothing in these minute institutions, considered in themselves, that appears worthy of the appointment of that wise and holy God whom the Jews knew, while the rest of the world lay in darkness; and, upon any other hypothesis, it would be difficult, if

not impossible, to account for the particular exactness required in these services, or for Moses' being so strictly charged to make all things *according to the pattern exhibited in the mount.*

We might expect, among a people designed by God for such purposes, very precise injunctions about the SACRIFICE; and, accordingly, the Jewish Ritual is full of them—in every part proclaiming, *without shedding of blood is no remission.* In the first institution of the system, at their coming out of Egypt, a lamb was to be sacrificed by every family, and the blood sprinkled upon the upper-lintels and door-posts, that they might be saved from the destroying angel; and when the institution was complete, the command appeared to be that every sin was to be expiated by blood, every defilement to be cleansed by blood, every sin of ignorance was to be atoned for by blood—God forgives no sin without blood: hence, did he thus manifestly reveal the intended way of salvation by blood. The Manner, also, of the sacrifice among the Jews, unfolded a great deal more of what was to come, than the same rite among the Heathen; as we should, indeed, expect: the animal was not to be a wild beast, or unclean one; but

tame, eatable, sociable, valuable, male, and in the prime of life: they were to be offered voluntarily by the persons; to signify, that, in order to find acceptance through the great atonement, we must depend cordially and sincerely upon it: he who offered the sacrifice was to lay his hands on it, confessing his sins; which imported his belief, that his sins were to be forgiven by his transferring them to another: after the death of the animal, the blood was sprinkled round about the altar, and toward the mercy-seat; this marked the virtue of the atonement, to satisfy God and open the way to his mercy: the washing of the sacrifice was to denote Christ's purity—the burning of it, his sufferings—the holy fire consuming it, denoted the wrath of God descending upon him.

In the various ceremonial defilements, contracted by touching unclean animals or dead bodies, or by leprosy or certain other diseases, the rites prescribed denoted purification by blood. Now, certainly, there is no obvious connection between purification and blood: if water had been used, it might have been said that its natural efficacy in cleansing was adopted, as an emblem of that power which cleanses the soul; but why blood-shedding should be the emblem of cleansing power, is unaccountable

on any hypothesis but this—that the death of some great propitiation was to be the means of purifying the soul from guilt and sin.

The carnal Jews saw but little of the meaning of these things, as might be expected; for, in all ages, the bulk of men seldom look beyond the outside of things. God therefore, in wonderful wisdom, makes use of their blindness to speak still more plainly of the thing intended. While they depended on their outward observances he tells them, *Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?* (Ps. l. 10—13). This should have naturally led them to consider, that, if God speaks so slightingly of the efficacy of merely literal sacrifices, while yet they were so strictly enjoined, it must have been their representing power and meaning that constituted their use. Again, an unknown person is introduced in the Fortieth Psalm saying, *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come! in the volume of the Book it is written of me.*

While the Law and the Psalms were thus gradually and harmoniously opening the way, and preparing the minds of men for the great blood-shedding, the Prophets' Writings, from age to age, kept pace with them, in unfolding more and more of the designs of God. Isaiah, at last, rapt in future times, sees Him as already come; and speaks of one who *hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;* who *was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; brought as a Lamb to the slaughter; for the transgression of my people was he stricken* (Is. liii. 4—8). Here is remission by the shedding of blood! After him, Daniel says, *After three-score and two weeks, Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself* (Dan. ix. 26).

More plain notices than these were scarcely necessary; and very few more were given till *the Desire of all Nations* came; who, after fulfilling every prophecy, one after another, by his birth, life, and miracles, finished the great work for which preparation had been making all along from the beginning of the world, by the sacrifice of Himself on the Cross, where he shed his blood, *for us*, and *for many, for the remission of sins.* The Jewish Ritual was now no more necessary: it had done its work, and was therefore abolished: and it is now more than one thousand seven hundred years since

Temple and Sacrifices have ceased. The general way of salvation preparing for all mankind, was published to all the world.

Thus the true way of pardon was opened, when neither God's mercy, nor our repentance, nor our good works could avail. Now God's mercy can be exercised, without detriment to his truth and holiness. He can be gracious and kind to sinful man—yet he can be true—yet he can be holy. Sin meets a dreadful punishment—yet sinners are saved. God can be merciful to us—yet his truth and holiness appear awfully displayed in the agonies of his Son, for the expiating of our sins.

*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus—Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience* (Heb. x. 19. 22). If God, with such care, such forethought, such preparation, has been providing an Atonement for you, it cannot be that he should disappoint hopes humbly placed on that atonement; and we are authorised to say, that if any man in the world will come for salvation from his sin in this way, he shall find it—*for the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin* (1 John i. 7). On the other hand, I leave it to yourselves to con-

sider, whether, if after all that God has been doing, not for himself, but for you—and Christ, not for himself, but for you—you still do not make it your business to use that atonement for the purposes for which God has designed it, by obtaining the pardon of your sins and being delivered from this present world, is it likely that God will bear with such neglect?—or listen to any other foolish and pretended way of recommending yourselves to his favour? If you had never heard of all that he has been doing for you, the case were different: but God has now declared it to you. Brethren, *if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God; and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing; and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace!* (Heb. x. 26—29).

III. Many important REMARKS might be made on the subject which we have been con-

sidering, if time would permit us to enlarge: but we can only observe, How irresistible are the evidences, not of Christianity only, to the confusion of Infidelity, but of that real and scriptural account of it, by which it appears to be the developing of a Plan of Salvation in the way of Atonement!

And since we have been tracing the works of God in this affair from the beginning of things to this day, it is natural to look forward to consider its probable effects on the world to the end of time. Surely when it is fairly unfolded to the blind votaries of superstition, among whom there are many, no doubt, in sincerity groping for the true way, and are practising austerities on their bodies and undergoing sufferings for salvation, which the Son of God has borne in his own body, they will perceive the wonderful fitness and suitableness of the true remedy to the necessities of sinful man. It is not for us to say whether all will believe: but the Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in all the world, for a testimony among all nations, and then shall the end come.

But, whatever shall be its effect on others, let us be careful, Dear Brethren, to secure an interest for ourselves in this great Salvation; that when all nations shall be gathered before

him, we may be numbered among the ransomed of the Lord. *Now, unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen!*

# SERMON II.

## THE LOVE OF GOD IN THE GIFT OF HIS SON.

JOHN iii. 16.

*God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

WHEN we wish to express strong feelings, or excite particular attention, we are apt to go for words to the extremities of time, space, and being. Thus, when the Apostle John would communicate to us the thought under which his own mind laboured, namely, the incalculable number of the remarkable things Christ said and did, he expressed it by saying, that if they were written every one, he supposed *the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.* In the Book of the Acts, Moses is described to have been in his childhood *beautiful to God*, as it is in the original; the meaning of which is, as it is rendered, exceedingly beautiful. Whenever

men are in transports of passion, they go, for terms of endearment or expressions of anger, beyond the little sphere in which their thoughts circulate when their tempers are quiet: a man furious with anger is never easy, nor seems to have expressed the feelings of his heart, till he has brought on something about God, his soul, and the word which is used to denote its everlasting misery: flinging about firebrands and death, he seems, during the existence of the paroxysm, to be endued with supernatural strength: he is like those furious spirits, of whom it is feigned, that they plucked up mountains by the roots, and hurled them at one another. It appears, then, that strong feelings and vivid conceptions, are generally efforts to reach beyond created being and finite duration. It is natural therefore, conversely, that the same emotions should in their turn be excited by the mention of all the great things that belong to religion.

We make these observations, that our minds may be duly prepared for the consideration of this text; which, besides the important matter contained in it, is remarkable for bringing into notice such persons and things only, as are in their nature at the very summit of being and of thought. The persons introduced are God, and Christ, and the whole world, and none else—

the subjects treated about, are endless happiness and misery, and nothing less.

I. The first word that meets us, as we approach the text, is GOD!

The name of God is heard by different men differently.

The Heathen hears it, without any emotion at all. He has been accustomed to attach the idea to some inferior being, who surpasses him in power, not in purity—to one who can sport, and play, and sin. He has been used to listen to songs, in which the praises of his God and all manner of obscenity are mixed up together—at least, transitions are made from one to another so readily, that the poor idolater cannot suppose that they are very unsuitable to each other. Of such a being's future judgment for sin he cannot be afraid; nor feel more at hearing his name, than at hearing of any other unimportant thing.

Not so the man brought up in a Christian Land. He may be a profane man; and may call upon the Almighty as often as he is surprised, without thinking of God at all: he may hear others do the same with equal indifference: but, at the serious mention of the Sacred Name, some awful thoughts will come over his mind: and he will think of a mighty Being, who

created him and can destroy him: his thoughts, though indistinct, as they ever must be in all, will correspond to the accounts which the Scriptures give of his Majesty, as being the first and the last—the only self-existent Creator and Governor of all—dwelling in inaccessible light, yet present every where, and knowing every thing. Conceptions of a being of this kind, allow nothing light and trifling to be connected with them. Moreover, the most thoughtless among us cannot help believing God to be a holy being: they know, also, that there is a judgment to come, and conscience tells them they are not prepared for it: hence, the mention of his name makes them uneasy, and they will compose their minds and give attention when something is said about God, but they are prepared to hear something which is sure to be disagreeable. Disagreeable or not, it cannot be unimportant.

II. The sentence, therefore, having begun with the name of God, let us go on to see what else may be said in it. *God so* LOVED. Love! Does *God love?*—CAN God love? This soft affection is found among creatures; and in exact proportion to its extent and power, do peace and harmony prevail: when we love, and are loved, we are ourselves happy and make others so. But

can it be said of God, that He loves?—of him, whom you represent as a jealous God—a great and dreadful God, who cast down the angels, and reserves them in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great day, and will turn the nations into hell if they forget him? Yes, though he has done these things, and must do them again, yet he loves. You will wonder how such opposite attributes, as love and unbending justice, can consist together; or else will begin to suspect that the love of God, of which we are speaking, is only the love which he feels for those who are worthy of it.

III. Let us advance a step farther in the text, and see:—*God so loved* THE WORLD—the *world* of which St. John saith, that it *lieth in wickedness.* No sign of worthiness appears here—*We were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another* (Tit. iii. 3.); that is, detestable ourselves, and detesting one another: nothing amiable appears yet. But, perhaps, they still retained some respect for God, though they were so full of hatred to one another: but *the Lord looked down from heaven,* and behold, *there was none doing good, no not one* (Ps. xiv. 2, 3)—*every imagination of the thoughts of the heart was only evil continually*

(Gen. vi. 5). It was not the mere infirmity of nature that led men into such an extent of depravity, but radical enmity in the heart. The heart, in its natural state, is not merely an enemy to religion, but enmity itself against God, being made up of malice and ill-will, and spiteful opposition to God for imposing the restraints of his laws upon us and preparing a place of punishment: we accounted him unjust and tyrannical: we would rather he were less holy, and still more that he did not exist at all. Now God, we are sure, must have been privy to these thoughts: had we attempted it, we could not have concealed them: his eye is fixed on the heart: he knows, and ever has known, all that is passing there; is fully acquainted with the malignity of every thought. But perhaps God thinks more lightly of these things than we would have it understood that he does; and if he had punished them, the punishment would not have been very terrible: but you will notice one expression of our text, *that they should not perish*. The idea of PERISHING leaves no room for that of recovery. Absolute ruin, then, would have been the consequence, if justice had taken its course.

Thus we need not go beyond our text, to find proofs of our being unworthy of God's love. When he undertook to introduce a new

dispensation whereby men might be saved, he found them perishing. But, in the government of a good and righteous God, no creature could have perished without deserving it. If men deserved to perish, they could not be worthy of his love.

Possibly this thought may occur to some—that men fill so high a place in the universe, that the preservation of them might be an object of importance; that perhaps God might take measures for preventing their excision, in order to preserve the integrity of his universal empire.

But, alas! the earth, with its grandeur, is but a speck before God. Could then the destruction of it, with all its inhabitants, diminish ought of God's glory?—would there not remain multitudes enough of holy creatures, yea of millions of worlds, to glorify him? Or if we were to suppose the whole universe, with all its wonders, to be blotted out and brought to nothing, would not He remain the same Great God, infinitely happy in Himself alone?—could he not, if he pleased, call forth another world with the same ease as when he spake this into being? But, in truth, so far is the salvation of men from being necessary to God's glory, that he would have been glorified by our

destruction: as our earth sunk in ruins, the inhabitants of heaven might praise God, in the same strains as those in which they will praise him at the fall of his other enemies; for thus they will sing in heaven, at the final execution of judgment—*We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned* (Rev. xi. 17)—and again they glorify him for the ruin of his enemies—*Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints* (Rev. xv. 3). Thus might the song of triumph be sung at the destruction of the race of men. They might have sung as we perished, *Just and true are thy ways!*

If then God was under no obligation to do any thing for us, but, on the contrary, might have justly left us to perish; if he might in righteous judgment have sent *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man* (Rom. ii. 8, 9) because they were enemies and rebels — there is no way of accounting for his being willing to save us, but by saying, that he chose that it should be so. It was mere sovereign grace, that moved him to have compassion on us. He might have left it undone with perfect justice, propriety, and honour to

himself—that he has done it at all, in any manner, is an interposition unexpected and extraordinary.

IV. If it is an act of mercy that God should suspend our punishment, what shall we say then, when God hath *so loved the world* as to *GIVE HIS ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON?*

He loved us; but could not resign his rights, or put up with a partial fulfilment of his will! A Person must be found capable of bearing the sins of men: and where was such an one, but in the bosom of God himself? If God will save sinners, he must give none other than His Own Son! His love to the world may be great, but will it draw from him a gift like this?

*Take now thy son*, said God to Abraham, *thine only son, whom thou lovest, and offer him up there:* this was the severity of the trial, that Abraham was to give up his only-beloved child. We pretend not to define accurately the relation which subsists between the Father and the Son: so far we may be certain from these names, that Christ is at least as dear to his Father, as a child to an earthly parent. If this be the case, can the Father give him? Is there any example of such generosity on earth, that we may be encouraged to hope? Was ever a person known to give his fortune to another,

who had no claim upon him; or to give the life of one of his own children, for the sake of a friend? much less would he do it for the sake of a person indifferent to him—still less for one who had used him ill—still less if he was still raging with enmity—least of all would he give an only child, for such a person, in such circumstances. To do any, the least of all these things, would argue a most unaccountable regard, when so many obstacles cannot prevent its exercise.

But what! can *the fellow of Jehovah* (Zech. xiii. 7) be given to man? Shall He, who is God, equal with the Father, *God over all, blessed for ever*—shall *the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and is to come;* shall HE leave his glory, and sojourn with mortals? Must *the Ancient of Days* put on a mortal tabernacle? What fellowship hath light with darkness? what agreement between dust and glory? Will the Father consent that one of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity be thus debased? "No!" he might say, "if this be the only condition, let them perish!"

But God *so loved the world, that he* GAVE *his only-begotten Son. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins,* (1 John iv. 10).

*Herein is love,* as if there were love in nothing else. May we not say, that to give us a being among rational creatures—therein is love; to have our life carried on so many years as a taper in the hands of providence—therein is love; to have food, and raiment, and kind friends—therein is love; to give us heaven—therein is love? No! *herein is love,* that *God gave his Son.* He gave him unasked for: man would never have conceived such a request; or, if he had, he would not have dared to urge it. God foresaw how His Son would be treated; yet he gave him, notwithstanding, to shame and to spitting, to pain and to sorrow, to a suffering life and disgraceful death; for so *God loved the world*—SUCH anxiety, SUCH desire, and concern was there in the heart of God, for the salvation of sinners!

V. The further we advance in the text, the more conspicuously will this truth appear. God gave his Son, that *WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH.*

The plan of salvation by Jesus Christ, is altogether peculiar: in it men are considered as all alike perishing—as well the virtuous as the profligate; because they have both broken that Law which allows of no violation, and provides no remedy. But, the Son of God having ap-

peared on the theatre of the world and suffered the penalty due to us, God sends forth this message into the world, and at this moment is delivering it to you, that he is willing to grant pardon and bliss to the sinner, who comes to him through Christ. Whosoever will venture to rest the whole weight of his concerns for eternity on this rock, shall find that it will not fail him: whosoever, pursued by avenging justice, will flee to this city, shall be safe—yea, if he be a murderer, he shall be safe: whosoever believeth—it matters not what he has been, only let him be convinced that he deserves punishment, and plead the death of Christ—the sentence of death shall be reversed, and a free pardon granted—he shall not perish, as he otherwise would have done—he shall not perish, though Satan would persuade him that he will—he shall not perish, though his remaining sinfulness threatens him every moment. He is *kept by the power of God through faith* (1 Pet. i. 5), and therefore *he shall not perish.*

The common objection of cavillers, here obtrudes itself—"Is not this the dangerous doctrine of salvation by faith only?" Would to God that they who thus idly speak would conceive rightly of their guilt, corruption, and danger! If they saw themselves ON THE BRINK OF EVERLASTING PERDITION, where they all are

by nature, they would no longer think of their works as meriting favour or purchasing an interest in Christ, but would cry, *Save, Lord, or I perish!* they would then see that if pardon be not by faith only, they are lost. They suppose we lay stress on faith, in contradistinction to other good works; whereas it is only an act of the mind, whereby it gives up all hopes founded on itself, and reposes on the mercy of God in Christ. May the sinner after this live as he will, or does he wish such a thing? Perish the thought! There is such a word as Gratitude in his vocabulary. Knowing why Christ came, it is his business to become more holy from day to day; and for this purpose the Spirit of God is given him.

But we are unwilling to pass the time in answering objections. It is a disgrace to human nature, that any should be found quarrelling with that way of salvation, which has originated solely in the transcending mercy of God. Yet so it is: how many in the world never understand or believe that *it is the savor of death unto death* to them (2 Cor. ii. 16). Many others there are, who have indeed no objections to make, but love sin too well to forsake it for Christ. Oh, think a moment of your abominable selfishness and base ingratitude! If God spared not his own Son but gave him up for

you, why should you refuse to resign any thing at the call of God?

Let those who believe in Christ remember that they are warranted to expect every real blessing; such as assurance of pardon, heavenly mindedness, every thing consolatory, sanctifying, and adorning: for he that *spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things!* (Rom. viii. 32). All is your's, for ye are Christ's. If God has parted so freely with that, which is so far dearer to him than any thing else, how shall he deny you any thing afterward? if he has so freely given you the greater mercies, how can you suppose he would deny you the less? And if he has given you this gift when you were alienated from him, it is not to be imagined that he will deny you any inferior mercy when you are in a state of amity with him. *If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life* (Rom. v. 10).

Oh what numerous, connected, well-secured, precious, and everlasting blessings and joys have we in our Lord Jesus Christ! Let us recur, with gratitude ever new, to the glorious theme; and take a view of it in its lengths, and breadths, and depths, and heights—let us pro-

claim to all around, the glad, the glorious, the joy-inspiring news of a Saviour born—let us blow the great trumpet, and make it known among the nations that the year of Jubilee is come. Come, ye sinners, draw near to the fountain of living waters: drink, drink deep of the sacred stream, drink in eternal life. When millions of years shall have passed away, your joys will be but beginning; and when millions more shall have passed away, they shall be no nearer ending.

Let us, then, join the choir of angels, and adore, with songs of highest praise, the love and mercy of our God. Let there be a new song in our mouths and in our hearts, even praises to our God. Let our meditation of him be sweet; and let our souls, which he hath redeemed, rejoice in God our only Lord.

While also we are rejoicing in the bounty of God, let us delight to imitate it. God gave his Son to them who had no claim: hesitate not to give to those whose helpless penury is a claim upon you. Give liberally, give cheerfully: so all the Christmas Song will belong to you—you will have a right to sing, not only *Glory to God in the highest*, but *Peace on earth, and Good-will toward men!*

# SERMON III.

## THE REIGNS OF SIN AND OF GRACE.

ROMANS V. 20, 21.

*Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; That as sin had reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

THE subjects which St. Paul treats of in his Epistles are so purely matters of Revelation, and his mode of illustrating and confirming them so much out of the beaten track, that often it requires no common attention to discern his purpose, or to follow where he leads. But, in this Chapter, his object is evident. Whether we have strength of mind, or not, to comprehend his reasoning, we may take the conclusion to ourselves, and thank God: for one more sweet and consolatory, was never yet heard upon our earth.

Here let us observe, that inferiority to others in intellect shall not be any loss to us in eternity.

The philosopher reasons about the rain, and finds out the cause of it—another cannot reason at all, but shares in the benefit notwithstanding. In the study of Revelation, some are delighted with a series of truths, the order and connection of which they see and follow—others are contented to be carried in the dark, knowing that they shall alight at last on a place where they are sure of their ground.

In this Chapter, a comparison is instituted between the miseries entailed on us by Adam, and the benefits obtained through Christ. It is shewn that as death *entered* into the world by sin, so it *passed* upon all men by sin: not their own sin, indeed; for though there was such a thing as sin in the world from the time of Adam till the giving of the Law by Moses, it could not be imputed to the sinner while there was no Law: for if there be no rule, there can be no transgression of a rule—nevertheless death reigned all that time, seizing all as it did Adam. Now as death must be a penalty due to sin, of what sin was it the punishment but of Adam's? Correspondent to all this is the salvation by Christ. *As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.* This is St. Paul's own statement of the doctrines of imputed sin and imputed

righteousness. *The Law*, he adds, *entered, that the offence might abound*—the rule was given, that the obliquity of men's actions might appear: *but where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound;* in order, *that, as* SIN *hath reigned unto death, even so might* GRACE *reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

I. Let us consider THE REIGN OF SIN; and then the Reign of Grace.

From the fall of Adam, we must date the commencement of the Reign of Sin. The instant it was admitted into the world, it assumed sovereignty; and, to such a dreadful extent has it succeeded in establishing its empire, that there is not a human being which it does not claim as its subject, from the instant of its birth. Nor are its claims disputed. All yield themselves at first quietly to its government; and the greater part are zealous in supporting its cause, when any symptoms of discontent appear in others.

This has been the state of things from age to age. Men differ from one another, in country and complexion, in civilization, temper, and habit; but all have this prominent feature in their character, that they are devoted to sin. The most untutored have learned to do the

work of this master; and the most correct have not unlearned it. Men quarrel and fight about forms of government; but they never attempt to dispute the authority of sin. It is absolute despotism, and yet the most high-spirited submit without a murmur. So firmly is its authority fixed, that, while the institutions of men have fallen into decay and their cities and empires been swept away, sin has not lost its power and strength. Conquerors have risen up and overturned governments; but they never shook the empire of sin. Philosophers have professed to be disaffected—they wrote and gave lectures—they collected followers, and made a great shew of doing something for men, of breaking their fetters and setting them at liberty; yet nothing was done: and no wonder, for there is no reason to believe that the sages were warm in the cause. They were more anxious to diminish its influence in the world, than to eject it from their own hearts.

However wide-spreading the dominion of sin may be, its power is as much felt by each individual, as if it were all concentrated against him. A servant stands more in awe of his master than of the king of the country; at least he is more often reminded of his subjection to the one than to the other. Sin, therefore, completes its tyranny by seizing, and

possessing for its own use, every member of the body, and every faculty of the soul, and making them serve and obey. Many times, in the next Chapter, this is intimated: *Ye were the servants of sin: Ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, unto iniquity.* Again, it appears from the twelfth verse, that sin naturally reigns in our mortal body, and we obey it.

It is to little purpose to urge the number of benevolent actions which natural men do, as if in some things they were not under the influence of sin, because it must be recollected that every defect is sin. There is no standard of right and wrong existing, but the Law of God, and that requires perfection. Measured by that rule, therefore, imperfection is sin. What is there then, that we can do, or say, or think, in which the power of this principle is not felt in a greater or less degree; and if it maintain that ascendancy in the heart, which it has by nature, what can proceed from it but that which is sinful? In that state, our motives and purposes, our imaginations and desires, our words and deeds, in short every thing that we do and every thing that we say is all wrong, all sinful, wicked, and displeasing to God.

To view the Reign of Sin in its true nature and fullest extent, we must notice two other

words of the text: *unto death—sin hath reigned unto death.*

We need not stay to notice all the other miseries brought on us by this tyrant—the havoc and ruin, the devastation and desolation, which mark its way—the terror and dismay, the grief and pain, which it occasions to individuals—the curse, and vexation, and rebuke, the sword, the blasting, and the mildew, which it brings upon nations; and the rest of human evils: for there is not one which sin has not caused. Let us think of Death: sin has caused the death of the whole man—body and soul!

Think of all the circumstances attending death—with what an agonizing struggle often the soul and body part—and how loathsome the body instantly becomes, and frightful in appearance—what sorrow and disorder it introduces into families; breaking the heart of the widow, or sending forth helpless children into the world—and you may see what *Sin* has done for us; for *the body is dead because of sin* only. It dies through the operation of natural causes; but its being liable to decay and death at all, is the punishment of sin.

But if the death of the body were all the mischief sin did us, it were small in the eyes of some, to whom death is preferable to life. But the soul is also naturally dead: for if when we

see a human form having eyes and seeing not, ears and hearing not, feet and walking not, understanding nothing, feeling nothing, we pronounce it a corpse; we must surely say of that man, who, endued with every faculty—reason, memory, affection—neither knows God nor fears him, nor loves him, that he is dead as it respects God: and this is the Scripture representation—we are all, by nature *dead in trespasses and sins*. The evil of this state is, that he who is spiritually dead, not only lives a life little superior to the brutes in rationality and enjoyment, but, after death, is fit only to be cast into hell. To heaven he cannot go; for there, there is only life and immortality; and death of every description is excluded. Besides, *the wages of sin is death:* having, therefore, performed the work of sin, he receives the wages, and dies the Second Death.

II. But now man need not go all this length in misery. Great as the power of sin really is, and irresistible as it may appear, man is not left without an alternative: for God has set up another kingdom in the world, in opposition to sin. It is now, therefore, THE REIGN OF GRACE, of which we are, in the second place, to speak.

For the establishment of this kingdom in

the world, measures were taken from the beginning: indeed the plan was laid before all time, ere sin began its usurpations; ere there existed a being to be the subject of its power. Four thousand years it remained almost unknown; but, at last, the day of its glory came: —the Son of God appeared upon earth, and a New Era commenced: Satan, like lightening, fell from heaven: Christ, by his Cross, spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them. By his resurrection, he rose *far above all power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come* (Col. i. 21). From this time the Empire of Grace began to be known. No longer confined to the narrow limits by which it was formerly bounded, it spread to the right and left; and nation after nation fell within its domain. Now as this kingdom is to stand for ever, for so has God decreed, and all adverse states and authorities shall be finally subdued or annihilated, it is clear that if we can become subjects of this kingdom we shall be secured from the general ruin, but not else. To induce you, therefore, to emigrate from your native land, to throw off I mean your allegiance to sin, we must endeavour to give some account of this kingdom, in which we wish you to become natu-

ralized. It is enough to say that *Grace* is upon the throne of it: *Grace reigns*, as you will soon perceive, if you consider how things are conducted in this kingdom.

The temper and disposition of a king is chiefly to be discovered by the Measures of his reign, and the Objects kept in view—the style of his Proclamations—the Instruments and Ministers employed—the State of those under his government—the Wars engaged in: these things, and others of the like nature, constitute the most certain criteria.

1. Now the OBJECT uniformly kept in view, in the Gospel Kingdom, is the happiness of its subjects in the way of holiness: *The Kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost* (Rom. xiv. 17). All the MEASURES taken with us are calculated to promote this end: whether affliction or prosperity be appointed us, all things work together for good, and bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. These are GRACIOUS proceedings.

2. Next, let us read some of the PROCLAMATIONS:—*Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good,*

*and let your soul delight itself in fatness Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live* (Is. lv. 1—3) *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls: for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light* (Matt. xi. 28—30). *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink* (John vii. 37). *Him, that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out* (John vi. 37). *Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me* (Rev. iii. 20). *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely* (Rev. xxi. 6. xxii. 17). It is Grace that reigns. Hear also how offenders are addressed: *Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool* (Is. i. 18). *I, even I am he, that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins* (Is. xliii. 25).

3. The INSTRUMENTS employed for enlarging the Gospel Kingdom, and keeping it in order,

next deserve notice. They are such as overcome the heart, by convincing the judgment. No force is to be used, but the force of persuasion. Expostulations, invitations, offers of a free pardon, promises of everlasting love, displays of the Glory of God and the excellence of his ways, but, above all, calling men's attention to the Cross, are the means to be resorted to. Christ, as *lifted up* on the Cross, *will* DRAW *all men* to him. It must be Grace that dictates these methods: they are not had recourse to, for want of power: for He, whose cause is pleaded, is able to compel—but he chooses to persuade. He *draws* us with *the cords of a man, with bands of love* (Hosea xi. 4).

4. Next, let us contemplate the SUBJECTS of this Kingdom; and it will soon appear, that God is determined to shew, by them, *the exceeding riches of his Grace, in his kindness toward them, through Christ Jesus* (Eph. ii. 7).

Many of them were deeply stained with guilt; drunkards, murderers—can these be saved?—it is the reign of Grace—they *are washed*—they *are sanctified*—they *are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God!* (1 Cor. vi. 11). Absolved from guilt and condemnation, are they suffered to depart, as innocent creatures, to begin their career anew? No: they would sin again, and their case would be

worse than before: he therefore keeps them as his own—yes, he makes them his own children! He hath *predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will; to the praise of the Glory of his Grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved* (Eph. i. 5, 6). Moreover, knowing the groveling disposition of their minds by nature, he gives his Holy Spirit to form their hearts anew, to raise their thoughts to high and heavenly things, to educate and discipline them for that state of glory for which they are reserved: and because, in this state of imperfect knowledge, they are in danger of losing sight of their high birth and exalted destiny, the Spirit bears witness with their spirit, as often as it is necessary, that they ARE the children of God: and since, notwithstanding all that is done for them, they know not, as they ought to know, what to pray for, the Spirit speaks for them—making intercession within them. Is there a rising apprehension that these things shall not last—that time, which brings all other things to an end, shall see these blessings come to nothing?—dismiss your fears! *whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified* (Rom. viii. 30). *The gifts and calling of God are with-*

*out repentance* (Rom. xi. 29): *he will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes: nevertheless,* his *loving-kindness will* he *not utterly take from him, nor suffer* his *faithfulness to fail: It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven* (Ps. lxxxix. 32, 33, 37). In union with this is the doctrine of the text. Grace must reign *unto eternal life.* As sin never loosens its hold upon its slaves, till it has ruined them beyond remedy; so grace never ceases to attend us, till it has placed us beyond danger.

But here an objection must be met and answered.

How is all this consistent with what we hear of God's holiness and hatred of sin? It will be thought a false, partial, and exaggerated representation. The Kingdom of Grace, if not visionary altogether, is far too agreeable to our natural feelings—its existence is not credible.

We answer, from the text, that grace reigns, *through righteousness*—consistently with righteousness—and by means of righteousness. How is this effected? *by Jesus Christ our Lord!* The sacrifice of Christ reconciles all apparent inconsistencies, and brings to pass seeming impossibilities.

For, by his having offered himself to bear the punishment of our sins and God's accepting

the substitution, it became possible for God to exercise mercy without disparagement to his justice. He could punish sin, and yet forgive it. In this way, we may be as if we had never sinned: no species of punishment being intended for us, we are as free from condemnation, as if we had been always perfectly innocent, or as if God were perfectly indifferent about sin and would never punish it. On the other hand, sin does not go unpunished, for CHRIST suffered for it.

But it will be asked, "Is God's justice as much satisfied by Christ's suffering for sin, as if the whole human race had suffered for it?" In answer to this, we refer to the DIVINE nature of Christ. If he be Divine, no assignable number of creatures can equal him in value; and, consequently, the death of all creatures can never be such a costly sacrifice to justice as his death.

It will be asked whether it is analogous to God's proceedings, that the guilty should escape, and the innocent suffer for him. We answer, that it is. Such things would occur every day, if men were found as willing to put themselves to trouble and suffer for others, as Christ shewed himself to be. Instances of voluntary suffering for others are very rare, through the selfishness of men;

but it is easy to see, that there is nothing in the constitution of things repugnant to the Gospel System: no disorder would arise in the world, were men as benevolent as Christ: on the contrary, much of the misery, and perhaps much of the sin of it, would be removed. The objection supposes that the sinner and the sufferer are perfectly distinct; whereas Christ and his people are one, by a very close and perfect union: it may, therefore, be very consistent with God's righteousness, to grant to one undeserving class, on account of their union to one who is deserving, those favours which he would otherwise have withheld from them. For the same reason, we need no longer to be surprised, that all the benefits and blessings, which we have ventured, from the Word of God, to affirm, as belonging to the subjects of the Kingdom of Grace, do indeed belong to those that are one with Christ, by faith: for if they are indeed in Christ and Christ in them, all the reward that he has merited for what he has done, in a relative capacity, may without hesitation be said to belong to us, by that right which results from the union.

If, after all, our jealousy for God's honour, and regard for what we have been always taught to consider as the first principle of reli-

gion, the holiness of God, make us hesitate to embrace a doctrine, which apparently relaxes the obligations to holiness, it must be recollected, that we have the same evidence for the mysteries of redemption, as we have for the divine holiness and a future judgment; so that no revealed truth has a claim to our belief, superior to that which this has. We do not perceive that the reasoning employed to shew the reasonableness of this way of salvation is altogether inconclusive—we do perceive, and it is easy to shew, that the contrary doctrine, which would give pardon without atonement, is clogged with far more difficulties: but, waving all argument, we appeal to Scripture; and that, we are confident, will bear us out in every particular.

Let then the glorious truth be opposed no more! Let it break down the barriers, which ignorance and unbelief put before it; and let it have free course through the earth! Let it be heard—let it be known—by you, by all, that *Grace reigns!* Let it dwell in the mind, and be fixed in the memory—and let it touch, with transport, all the springs of life! Oh the transporting view which it gives us of the love of God! Why have we ever forgotten it? *God is love!* Nothing now need keep us from bliss! Divine love hath removed far off every obstacle

—it has cleared the way for us all round—let us go forth unto the liberty of the glory of the Sons of God. Let SIN no longer detain us in darkness and misery. What though it hath long reigned over us, and the hope of emancipation has almost forsaken us—what though the consciousness of guilt seem to forbid your approaches to the Kingdom of God—remember that *Grace reigns* there. It seeks new subjects, and the most unworthy are accepted. It bids us to ask, and we shall receive; to seek, and we shall find; to knock, and it shall be opened unto us.

Are there any here who are *fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God?*—and have they need to be reminded that *Grace reigns?* What mean your idle fears? Give them to the wind. They are not pleasing to God, though they seem to arise from reverence for his laws. It is this unbelief, this measuring God by self, this keeping Christ and his Glory in the back ground and letting self be prominent, that tends to breed confusion in the government of Grace. We conform most accurately to the regulations of God's Kingdom, when we believe, and trust, and hope against hope, and rejoice with the joy of faith. Let us have a stronger apprehension of the freeness of God's Grace, and the little reason there is

to doubt of our acceptance, and we shall take more pleasure in the Lord: so *the joy of the Lord shall be our strength.*

Finally, being happy ourselves in the Kingdom of Grace, let us look abroad and try to make others so. Let us pray that the Saviour may sway his sceptre over all the world. Let us expect the day, when sin's ancient empire shall be overturned, even in these realms, especially in this land, the focus of Heathenism, the citadel of sin, where it seems to have made its last stand, and from which it will be last of all expelled, if we may judge from appearances. But at last it must yield; for the decree is gone forth, that to the Son of God is *given Dominion, and Glory, and a Kingdom, that* ALL *people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed* (Dan. vii. 14). Amen. May his *Kingdom come!* for *worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive Power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Glory, and Honour, and Blessing.*

# SERMON IV.

## SCRIPTURE MORE PERSUASIVE THAN MIRACULOUS APPEARANCES.

LUKE XVI. 31.

*And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

THE parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus conveys one of the most solemn warnings to the gay and thoughtless, that is to be met with in any part of Scripture. The descriptions which it contains of the frightful end of a life spent in thoughtlessness and sin, are awfully calculated to rouse our attention, and force upon our minds the reality of an Hereafter. Happy is it for the rich and great, who hear so seldom from their fellow-creatures the voice of truth, that their Maker has given them such plain and faithful admonitions of their peculiar dangers.

Our Lord, from the beginning of the Chapter, had been speaking of the use and abuse of

wealth; and of the impossibility of having the heart set, at the same time, upon God and upon the world: *No servant can serve two masters.* The Pharisees ridiculed him. After a mild rebuke to them, he proceeds to confirm the whole of what he had been saying, by the parable: *There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores.*

Let us consider, first, the DIFFERENT CONDITIONS OF THESE MEN ON EARTH.

We are first introduced to a man of rank and fortune, living in the fashionable and expensive style of the day:—stately mansions—superb clothing—splendid equipage—numerous attendants—sumptuous entertainments—courting friends—and flattering sycophants were, of course, his portion and daily enjoyment: to many in his day, he was an object of admiration and envy; and a better portion than his is sought by very few, in any age: it appears that he was a young man, as he left a father and five brethren alive at the time of his death. The POOR man was as destitute as a human being could well be: he wanted the common necessaries of life: in addition to this, he was full of disease and sores; without medical aid to

cure them, or even a friendly hand to bind them up; so that the dogs came and licked them: he was carried, because unable to walk; and as if no man cared what became of him, he was laid or cast at the rich man's gate, to gather a scanty and precarious subsistence from the crumbs which fell from his table: thus, destitute of food, of health, of friends—an outcast from society—he protracted a wretched existence, till death relieved him from his sorrows.

It will tend to reconcile us to the seemiug inequality of the situations in which they were placed by Providence, if we survey their STILL MORE DIFFERENT STATES IN THE INVISIBLE WORLD.

The rich man died, and was *buried.* The burial of the rich man only being mentioned, it was probably intended to be signified that his funeral was conducted with that magnificence which usually attends the burial of the great. *The rich man died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.* Hell! does it not exist only in the fears of fanatics? Alas! we need not doubt; for here our Saviour shews us one of our fellow-creatures, who found himself there: he closed his eyes in death, and when he opened them again he was in flames! Hear his piteous cry: *Father*

*Abraham, have mercy upon me: I am tormented in this flame.* What a change had ensued! To pass from the warm precincts of life to the cold chambers of the grave is appalling, even in thought, to human nature: but, to exchange the soft pillows of ease for a bed of fire—the enjoyment of sumptuous banquets, for the want of even so much as a drop of water to afford a moment's ease—to find friends and acquaintances all gone, and himself left alone with infernal fiends—what a transition for a votary of the world! no amusements, no employments, no rest, no hope, but irremediable agony and endless despair! Abraham replied to the rich man's request, that the difference of the situations in which he and Lazarus were, was occasioned by what had happened to them both on earth: *Remember, that thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things.* Remember! Had he remembered on earth, he would not have been called to remember in hell. It is for want of remembering that people perish. They must not be reminded of death: such topics must be carefully excluded from conversation, lest they should induce melancholy. Thus they are forgotten, till the remembrance returns in hell! *Remember, that thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things.* He was not to blame for being rich; for wealth, honestly gained, is God's gift:

but he valued those things more than any thing spiritual. He called them HIS good things!

Abraham, in answer to the Rich Man's request that Lazarus might come to him, said, that there was no passing from heaven to hell, or from hell to heaven: If there had been, Abraham would have prayed for him. Hence we may learn that to pray for the dead is useless. God has given us life as a time of probation and trial; and the Scripture always grounds its exhortations to diligence on this, that *the night* of death *cometh, when no man can work* (John ix. 4); and that *whatever our hand findeth to do, we should do it with our might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither we go* (Eccl. ix. 10); and that, at the Day of Judgment, we shall receive *according to the things done in the body*, no reference being made to the things which we do or suffer in a separate state while our bodies are lying in the grave

The Rich Man, finding his first request could not be complied with, begged that Abraham would send Lazarus to his father's house, and to his five brethren, lest they also should come to the same place of torment. This is remarkable. While on earth, he only thought of his pleasure or interest; and did not think it worth his

while to be at much pains about his own soul, and much less about those of others: but now he is of another mind; and is sensible that if his brethren, who lived in the same neglect as he did, knew what hell is, they would take more care. *Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the Prophets—let them hear them:* they have already abundant warning—let them make use of that. The Rich Man replies, *Nay, Father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent:* to which he answered, *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.* By Moses and the Prophets is meant, the Old Testament. They would not be *persuaded:* that is, to forsake their sins and turn to God, *though one rose from the dead*—though one should go either from Heaven, where they see the torments of the damned; or from Hell, where they feel them.

I. It is this point that we propose to illustrate—the WARNINGS OF GOD'S WORD ARE MORE ADAPTED TO BRING SINNERS TO REPENTANCE, THAN THE RISING OF ONE FROM THE DEAD.

Sinners are disposed to think, that, if they had ever seen hell, or had seen a person who

had felt it, they would forsake all their sins, and do all that they could to escape it: but as they are only told of it in the Bible, they often think that it may be a mere delusion and fancy. But sinful men know not what they would have. They are fixedly averse to break off their sins by righteousness: therefore, to excuse themselves, they object against the sufficiency of their means. But God, who knows our nature and circumstances, knows what is most adapted to us: He, who made the faculties of our souls, knows what will have the tendency to affect them: in contriving and appointing the means of our salvation, he chooses better for us than we should ourselves. If a person were to rise from the dead, and give a particular account of what he had seen, he would probably frighten many who are not terrified by reading the Bible: it would very much affect them, on account of the novelty of the thing. Men are apt to be much affected by strange things, and to be much affrighted at spectres in the dark, because they are unusual: but if they were as common as preaching is, they would lose their effect. On such an unusual occasion as the rising of one from the dead, men might perhaps reform their lives, and would never forget what they had seen. But we are to consider which would have the greater tendency to awaken

us, if both alike were new and unusual; to be warned by the great God himself, or by a man coming from the invisible world. It is in this view that we shall consider the matter, and we shall shew what advantages the former mode has above the latter.

1. GOD KNOWS BETTER THAN DEPARTED SOULS, WHAT THE PUNISHMENT OF SINNERS IS.

He is everywhere present with his all-seeing eye. He pervades all space. *If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there!* (Ps. cxxxix. 8). He is present there, where they feel the misery; and he sees into the innermost recesses of the hearts of those miserable spirits—he sees all the anguish there, for he upholds them in being. They, and all their powers, are in his hands. Besides, it is HIS wrath, which they endure: he measures out to them their several portions: his anger is that fire, in which they are tormented. He, therefore, is certainly able to give as clear and distinct an account of hell as the miserable inhabitants of it. He too alone knows what Eternity is.

2. We have THE TRUTH ON SURER GROUNDS through God's testimony, than from the testimony of one rising from the dead.

In the latter case, we should be uncertain whether there were not some delusion. We know

that it is impossible for God to lie, and that things must be precisely as he declares them to us: but if one should rise from the dead, we could not be so sure that we were no way imposed upon, and that he himself was not subject to some delusion—we could not be so sure that his account was not exaggerated. Moreover, such a one could not convince us that WE should come to that place of torment, if we did not repent and reform. And though more witnesses than one should come, there is no authority equal to that of God: there is no testimony from the invisible world, so indisputable and unquestionable as the divine testimony. How could we know that they had not come to deceive us? How could we know upon what views they acted? Whereas we have the strongest ground of assurance that the First Being, and Fountain of all being and perfection, is nothing but light and truth itself; and therefore he cannot deceive, or be deceived.

3. The warnings of God's Word have the advantage, on account of THE GREATNESS AND MAJESTY OF HIM WHO SPEAKS.

The declarations of those, who are great, excellent, or honourable, have a more powerful tendency to move the heart, than of those who are not so. Things spoken by a king affect

more than the same things delivered by an equal. But God is the King of Kings. Shall we be unmoved, when the Universal Sovereign speaks? Hear now: the Prophet summons the whole creation to attend when God speaks—*Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken!* (Is. i. 2.)

4. It more evidently shews the importance of the affair, that GOD SHOULD IMMEDIATELY CONCERN HIMSELF IN IT, than the coming of one from the dead would do.

Those things in which Kings most immediately concern themselves, are commonly matters of the greatest importance: they leave lesser concerns to their ministers and agents. Now God, in all ages of the world, hath shewed himself much concerned in this matter. How abundantly hath he warned us in his Holy Word!—how earnest has he shewn himself in it!—how many arguments and expostulations has he used, that we might avoid the way to hell!

5. God's warning us of a danger has a greater tendency to influence us, because HE IS OUR JUDGE.

The punishment is that to which He condemns, and which He inflicts. What he warns us against is His own wrath and vengeance. He tells us that if we go on in sin, He will destroy us. He

tells us so HIMSELF; and this is certainly more calculated to affect us, than to be told so by another who is not to be our judge.

6. God is infinitely wise; and KNOWS BETTER HOW TO SPEAK PERSUASIVELY TO US than one rising from the dead.

He perfectly knows our nature and state; and knows how to adapt his instructions and warnings to our frame and circumstances in the world. If one should come from the dead to warn sinners, it may be that he would tell them of Hell in a manner that would drive them to despair, rather than excite them to strive for salvation, in the diligent use of the means which God has appointed. But God knows what revelation we can bear; and what is the most proper to do us good in this our infirm, dark, and sinful state. It is good for us to be warned and instructed by God, who knows best how to do it.

II. Now since the rising of one from the dead seems to us the most calculated of all other methods to awaken us, and yet our Saviour says, that even this would not have the effect, where the testimonies of Moses and the Prophets fail, it is a natural inference that ALL OTHER METHODS THAT COULD BE IMAGINED WOULD BE INEFFECTUAL.

Men think that if they saw some prophet and his miracles, this would strongly impress them. But how was it in those times in which there were prophets? There has rarely been a more degenerate age, than that in which Elijah and Elisha lived: the people did not regard their prophecies or miracles; but walked in their own ways, and served their own Gods: so that Elijah thought that there were none left of the true worshippers of God.

Would it be sufficient if we could hear God, therefore, actually speak from heaven? But, in the time of Moses, they heard God speak out of the midst of the fire, and saw Mount Sinai covered with smoke and flame, and shaken to its base. Did they all turn from their sins? It is true that they were very much affected at first; but how hard-hearted and rebellious they soon became!

Men are apt to suppose that if they had lived in the time of Christ, and had seen and heard him, and witnessed his miracles, they must have been convinced, and would have obeyed him: but what was the fact of men like the Pharisees, who did see him? few were brought to repentance, by all his discourses and miracles—few were his constant followers!

The Scripture is full of instances to prove, that, if the Word of God will not awaken sinners,

nothing will. And we see enough in these days to convince us of it. Men sometimes meet with things by which we should think it impossible that they should not be reformed, if we did not see the fact. They sometimes hear the warnings of dying men, who are expecting to go to hell: they are affected for a while; but the solemn warning does but just touch them, and passes away. Sometimes they themselves are laid upon a bed of sickness, and their lives hang in doubt before them: they are brought to the sides of the grave, and their hearts are full of terror; yet, if they recover, they soon forget it, and return to the ways of folly and wickedness. Sometimes this is repeated—they are taken sick again—are again in extreme danger—their hearts are again full of terror—and many promises and vows are made; yet, on recovery, they forget all, and again return to sin and folly! Such things may convince us that where the Word of God is not effectual, neither sickness, nor any thing else, is likely to be so.

III. Hence let us LEARN the dreadful hardness of our hearts—that we are not more moved and wrought upon, by the best means which Infinite Wisdom could provide.

How few are there, who are effectually changed by the Word of God! They are very thinly sown;

there is but here and there one! But how just will God be in punishing the impenitent! For he gives them the best means of reclaiming them; and gives them abundant warning before he punishes them. What could he have done more than he has done? We cannot devise or imagine a method, better than that which God hath given us. How justly therefore are ungodly men punished! how inexcusable will they be!

Let us be induced to improve those means, that is, let us hear Moses and the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles: let us be persuaded to study the Scripture more; to read and hear it carefully; to consider it thoroughly; and daily to walk according to its rule.

The danger of neglecting it, on any pretence, cannot be more forcibly exhibited than by recurring to the circumstances of the narrative before us. And it is well worth our while to inquire, in what we differ from the Rich Man. We are not worse, we hope, than our neighbours: we would not injure a fellow-creature in the world: we believe in the Scriptures: but might not the Rich Man have said the same with perfect truth?—yet he went to hell. He was not charged by Abraham with defect in any of his duties toward men—yet he went to hell: why? because he was *a lover of plea-*

*sure, more than a lover of God*—he loved the world and the things of the world. He wished to receive his good things in this life. He preferred the present to the future. He could not sacrifice present enjoyments, in the expectation of future rewards—he could not submit to privations, though the necessities of his soul required it—he could not undergo the difficulties, or brook the self-denial, of a religious life—he would not make himself miserable, when he had the means of enjoyment in his power—he kept up his religion perhaps by the cursory performance of a few heartless duties; but he would not suffer it to interfere with his pleasures, or debar him from agreeable society whether it consisted of persons fearing God or otherwise. God would let him have his choice—his Bible being neglected, God sent him no other monitor. He ate, he drank, he laughed, he played; but, while yet a young man, he died and went to hell!

Men and Brethren, can any thing open your eyes if this does not? Can you not yet perceive for whom our Saviour spoke the Parable?—plainly, not for the wicked, but for those whose chief concern is the body and this life. If there be any doubt on this head, see it confirmed by our Saviour's own words: *Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger* (Luke vi. 25).

Granting that these words need not be taken in their literal sense, there is something in the spirit of them that may shew us what Christianity is. If the words mean any thing at all, they certainly must mean that there is a strictness, a severity, a self-denial, accompanying the sincere profession of religion, utterly inconsistent with the thoughtlessness, self-indulgence, idleness, and dissipation prevalent among all classes of people who call themselves Christians. Suppose not because you are not precisely in the circumstances of the Rich Man, able to gratify an expensive and voluptuous taste, that his case is not yours; for the difference of outward circumstances, whether of wealth or poverty, is nothing at all before God. He looks on the heart. If you WISH to have your good things in this life, whether you have them or not, and undervalue eternal glories, you will most certainly lose those glories.

Our Saviour, you will observe, has taken the two extremes, of earthly felicity and of woe.

The instance of earthly felicity, was one who was healthy, and rich, and young; blest with friends, respectable connections, a large fortune, and all that riches can bring of the comforts and elegancies of refined life. This is a case, the most in point of any that can be supposed; for regal dignity is quite out of the

question; and the honours of the state are attainable by so few, that they do not often enter into the schemes which we form of earthly bliss, except perhaps in very early youth; but the advantages and comforts expected to be derived from riches, are so suited to the taste of all men, and so probably within the reach of all men, that the case supposed by our Saviour is peculiarly apposite, as a general example.

The instance of the other man is, likewise, almost an extreme case. Loathsome sickness, and abject poverty, and friendless solitude, conspired to set him at the lowest degree in the usual scale of human misery.

Now if the state of Lazarus with piety, is to be preferred to that of the Rich Man without it, in these extreme cases, much more in all cases which are likely to be ours, should not poverty, and continual mortification, and sorrow, and death, be preferred to pleasures which end in ruin? For whether we are in prosperity or adversity, we are like the rich man and the beggar at his door, alike hastening to the grave: the whole of this life is but a dream: death will soon terminate our joys and sorrows; and our condition, in the future world, will depend entirely on the manner in which we have lived in this state of probation.

God has drawn aside for a moment the veil

of the invisible world, and shewn us what we shall all be in a little time. Let us endeavour to give these truths a reality in our minds. Let us believe what will be the issue of a worldly life. And let us live now as we shall wish we had lived when our state is irreversibly fixed.

# SERMON V.

## THE DOOM OF THE WICKED.

PSALM IX. 17.

*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.*

MEN and Brethren, if religion were only a cunningly-devised fable, if that Hell of which you read in the Bible were only an invention of crafty deceivers, you might despise their threatenings, and go on in sin. Moreover, if it were only the drunkard, the murderer, the adulterer, the sabbath-breaker, or the common swearer, that was to find his portion in hell, then the sober and moral among you might please themselves with the hope of escape. But if the Almighty has himself thundered out of heaven, and made known to all men, not only that he hath prepared a place of torment for the wicked, but that all who *forget God* shall be turned into it, it behoveth every one of us to hear, believe, and tremble.

Brethren, let the words of our text convince you that the Word of God speaks plainly. Certain vain and ignorant persons are shocked at the coarseness of this subject; but you now hear God speaking for himself. This, then, is the threatening of Jehovah, which his justice and truth engage him to execute, that *the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.*

At the very recital of these words, some of you must be convinced that they are in danger: their consciences must testify, that, if they die as they are now living, they must perish. But by far the greater number are saying to themselves, "Whatever others may be, I have no reason to believe myself to be wicked, or that I forget God." Now, my Brethren, you that speak after this manner, may PERHAPS be right; but it is POSSIBLE you may be WRONG. If you are right, you need not fear to inquire into your reasons for thinking so: if you are wrong, it will be but a poor exchange to obtain a false peace for a little while in this world, at the expense of awakening from delusion in the next. It is, therefore, far wiser to ascertain the point. Let us then, for this purpose, first inquire, who are the Persons described in the text; and, in the second place, declare their Final Doom.

I. We shall inquire, who are THE PERSONS DESCRIBED IN THE TEXT.

We apprehend that *the wicked*, and *all the nations that forget God*, are the same persons. In the sight of God, all are wicked who forget him: yet, in compliance with the usual sense put upon these words, let us suppose two sorts of persons spoken of—the wicked, those who are openly immoral; and the other, those who are more decent in their conduct.

1. The WICKED, or immoral, are those whose sins carry the sentence of their condemnation along with them. To call these sins into a particular review, were unnecessary. Deeply marked with the character of Hell, they proclaim to every beholder to what place they are tending. Let it suffice to adduce certain passages of Scripture, in which God has summed up these workers of iniquity, in one complete catalogue, and assigned one doom to them all. *Know ye not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God* (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10). *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, drunkenness, and such like: of the which*

*I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God* (Gal. v. 19, 21). Would there were none such in the present assembly!

2. Leaving these texts to their consideration, we proceed to inquire who they are that FORGET GOD.

God hath commanded us to remember him in ALL our ways. Not to do this, is to forget him.

"What then," you ask, "is it possible for any man to be always thinking of God? Is there not a time for all things? Is it not sufficient that we think of him at proper seasons: such as on the sabbath, or at morning or evening prayer?" No, Brethren; it is not sufficient. God says, *My son, give me thy heart* (Prov. xxiii. 26)—thine affections: love me, and you will think of me. The good man may, through infirmity, lose sight of God; but he always accounts it a loss, and longs to regain it: but it is a sign of WICKEDNESS if we forget God, wilfully and deliberately, in any part of our conduct. God requires ALL the heart and ALL the life to be devoted to his service. And, indeed, there is as much reason why we should remember him in ALL our ways, as in ANY ONE of them: if it were lawful to forget him, that is, to have no regard to his authority in one particular, it

would be lawful also to forget him in another: thus the rule of right would be left to every man's own choice, and God would be no longer the Governor of the World.

It is, therefore, trifling with Scripture to urge that you do not forget God, merely from this circumstance, that you sometimes think of him; for you may now certainly perceive, if God be wilfully excluded from any one of your thoughts, you are so far wicked.

But we need not strain this point to prove your guilt. It is easy to shew, concerning a great part of you, that he is scarcely in any of your thoughts: you forget his Laws—you forget his Mercies—you forget his Presence.

(1) There are some who forget God, as a Law-giver, to such a degree, that they never inquire what laws he has given; nay, disobey those laws which they know.

Ask yourselves, whether you are not living in the daily habit of seeking your own pleasure —whether it be not your daily question, not "What is the will of God?" but "What is MY will?"—not "What does God command me to do?" but "What do I think fit to do? what will gratify the flesh, or secure most pleasure to myself? what will promote my honour or advance my interests in the world?" Are not these the considerations, that tacitly

suggest themselves; and these the principles, that move us to action? We do not ask whether you run the road of dissipation, and are known in the circles of fashion: perhaps many of you have not the means of following your own humour, and the bent of your own inclination, except in a few instances. Do you not find, that, whenever you have the means of enjoyment, you immediately set about inquiring how you may gratify yourself to the utmost? When you have now and then leisure, do you send up a petition to God, that he would direct you to pass your time to his glory and the good of your soul? or do you not rather waste your hours in idle conversation, and employ them according to your own humour? But is not this neglect of inquiring about His will, a forgetfulness of God your Maker? What must be said of that servant, who would not take the trouble so much as to know his master's will? Indeed, *A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts unto you* (Mal. i. 6).

Further, Consider whether you do not through forgetfulness of God, disobey those laws which you know to be his. You call yourselves Christians: there is probably, therefore, not one

here who does not know that God has commanded all men, everywhere, to repent—to be born again—to renounce the world and its vanities—to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts—to be poor in spirit—to mourn for sin—to hunger and thirst after righteousness—to be pure in heart—to be constant and earnest in prayer—to be laying up treasures in heaven—to enter in at the strait gate, and to walk along the narrow way that leadeth unto life—and, in fine, to be looking for the day of God, in all holy conversation and godliness: and yet are you not conscious that you do not put one of these into practice, but that you live in the habitual neglect of some or all these duties, every one of which you know God has commanded?

(2) You forget God in another particular, namely, by forgetting his Mercies.

On this head let me ask you, whether you acknowledge his mercies—whether you bow your knees, in fervent and affectionate thanksgiving, for having been blest with health; for having been fed by his bounty; for mercies personal, social. Do you confess that every thing which you receive at the hand of God is mere mercy? If he were to afflict you with disease and strip you of all your comforts, would he give you no more than you deserve? If he were to

condemn you to everlasting misery, would he be just? Do you believe that you deserve it? "No," you say: "what have I done to deserve it?" You think God would be unmerciful, if he were to destroy you!

And, above all, my Brethren, what think ye of Christ, who is, according to Scripture, God's unspeakable gift? Do you shew that you bear due regard to God's mercy in sending Christ, by believing in him, coming to him, casting yourself upon him as a lost and ruined sinner? Have you ever devoted yourself to him—becoming his disciple, esteeming his reproach, and saying, in short, with a true heart, "Henceforth I will not live unto myself?" (2 Cor. v. 15). Ask yourselves whether you ever thought of Christ, with real pleasure and genuine satisfaction of heart. When you speak of him, or of God's mercy in giving him, as you sometimes do in the public prayers, is it not rather a forced or thoughtless acknowledgment, than the grateful tribute of a broken heart? Christ has said, *He, that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he, that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he, that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me* (Matt. x. 37, 38). Do you thus love and obey him, counting all

things but dung and dross to win him, and forsaking all to follow him? Alas, my friends! you know it is no such thing; and what is worse, you do not even desire that it should be so. You start at the thought of unceasing self-denial! You would think yourself miserable in a life of godliness! You seek your happiness, not from God, but the world. You could, in your own opinion, be as happy as you are, if there were no God—no Saviour. I may say to you, as our Lord to the Jews, *Ye have not the Love of God in you*! (John v. 42).

Thus you slight and neglect the rich mercies of God, either by not counting the cost, or by determining not to pay it; thus proving that altogether you undervalue the blessing to be bought!

(3) Let us proceed to remark, in the third place, that you forget God by forgetting his Presence.

It is God's presence which made and upholds the universe, and which directs every event of our lives. It is this, therefore, that makes the frame of Nature sacred, and hallows the varying turns of Providence. We do not ask whether you admire the marks of his creating finger, and trace his footsteps as they are seen when he goes to and fro over the earth. Let us come nearer home. God's eye pierces into our hearts. *All things are naked and opened unto*

*the eyes of him, with whom we have to do!* (Heb iv. 13)—He knoweth our thoughts afar off: (Ps. cxxxix. 2.)

Do you thus remember his awful presence? Are you anxious that your hearts should be a pure and living temple to his praise? Do you love to walk with God; to cry to him, with holy confidence, *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me?* (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24).

On the contrary, do not you know that if you were to profess to have any such secret communion with God, you would *lie to the Holy Ghost,* and would almost expect the fate of Ananias? Do you not know that you securely indulge the lustful thought, and secret vanity, and covetous desire of gain, and bitterness of revenge and anger; and freely give the reins to those appetites, which the eye of man cannot scrutinize? God sees them, and sees them with anger; but you are not concerned! What you would be ashamed and shocked for man to know, that you commit before God without fear and without remorse! You say, in excuse, that you are not aware of God's presence; that you forget that his eye is fixed upon you: but, by so saying, you confess what we aimed at proving, namely, that you forget his presence.

Thus, then, we have described a character, not difficult to be drawn. Let not such persons expect that they shall dwell with God: forgetting his laws, they cannot join in the blessed obedience of angels: forgetting his mercies, they could not sing praises to the Lamb: forgetting his presence, they shall be banished from his presence for ever!

But it is not a negative suffering only, which they are to undergo; for we know him that hath said, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord* (Rom. xii. 19)—They have paid me contempt: I will repay them vengeance.

II. Hear, therefore, their FINAL DOOM—*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God!*

Men, in general, do not wish to hear this place so much as mentioned, much less described as the portion of the wicked: but it is better to hear of it than to dwell in it; and it is by hearing of it, that we must be stirred up to escape it. It is degrading to human nature, that we must draw an argument from such a source—that we must dip our shafts in the lake that burneth with fire. It is painful and humiliating to reflect that beings, capable of being constrained by love, should require to be driven by an iron scourge! Hell is often

described by our Lord Jesus Christ. He was too compassionate and serious to excite groundless terrors. As he said to his disciples, *In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you* (John xiv. 2); so we may say of Hell: there, then, are many mansions, if it were not so he would have told us. Hell is often described by him as a place in which both body and soul are tormented for ever. To one of these descriptions we will refer you.

In the Ninth Chapter of St. Mark's Gospel, the eternity of torment is six times described! The *fire* and the *worm* are such images of the causes of suffering as are addressed to the senses. Christ describes hell as a place of inconceivable torment and everlasting misery. He describes it by saying, *their fire is not quenched.* Fire, a dreadful element, is a scorching thing, and enters deep into the senses: yet Hell is represented to be *a lake of fire and brimstone* (Rev. xix. 20). But if there were any period set to their sufferings—if, after millions of years, they were to be reduced to nothing, they might bear it: but this is their misery, that it is for ever! Think how tedious is the motion of time when you are in pain—how you wish the hours away! What must it be to suffer such pain as will make every moment appear an age? and yet there must be an eternity of those ages!

Our Lord also compares it to the gnawing of a *worm*, which preys on the vitals: by which is signified that anguish of spirit and remorse of conscience which they must for ever feel, and keen disappointment at having lost for ever past opportunities: *their worm dieth not*. They have fallen *into the hands of the Living God:* therefore, so long as He liveth, that is, for ever, so long must they be subject to the execution of his wrath! These things are within the apprehension of all—it is a very plain thing of which we speak. Whoever do go to a place of torment continue there for ever!

This place will be the portion of them that forget God. Here, foolish and ignorant men scoff at eternal torments: they say, within themselves, of Sin—"Is it not a little thing? Will a merciful God, who knows our weakness, punish so dreadfully what we can scarcely help doing?" But what says God? "*Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself* (Ps. i. 21). Because thou didst smile at sin, thou thoughtest I should do so too. Because I forgave the sins of my penitent people, thou thoughtest I should forgive thine without repentance." They will find that God was in earnest, when he warned them *to flee from the wrath to come* (Matt. iii. 7). He said to them on earth, *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die* (Rom.

viii. 13): they did live after the flesh; hoping, no doubt, that God would not be true to his word. But do not they find, now that they feel the pains of hell get hold upon them, now that they have actually died and are in hell, that God is faithful? Though we believe not, but deny him, yet he cannot deny himself. Believe it, Brethren, *God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* (Num. xxiii. 19).

Some are so weak as to suppose that the numbers who must perish, if all this be true, will secure them against the threatened vengeance; or, at least, move the commiseration of the Judge. But we read in the text, that though they be whole *nations*, they cannot withstand his almighty arm: however numerous, or however strong, he can in a moment hurl the mightiest criminals into endless ruin: thus he speaks by his Prophet—*Hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it* (Is. v. 14); and, *As the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because*

*they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel* (Is. v. 24). And hath not this dreadful threatening been fulfilled? hath not our Lord told us of a rich man, who, *in hell lifted up his eyes, being in torment?* it was not said that he was sent thither for being a drunkard, or a fornicator, or an extortioner: but he had forgotten God. That narrative, I mean of Dives and Lazarus, exhibits realities. Is there such a place as hell? Does any one descend into it, and find himself actually there? The rich man did!

Let it, then, be established as an awful truth, that they who wilfully neglect to obey any of God's laws which they know, or who live without Christ, that is, ignorant of him—do not follow him in the regeneration, or who indulge the secret sins of the heart, thus disregarding the divine presence, are those that forget God, and shall be turned into hell.

Now pause awhile, and reflect! Some of you perhaps by this time, instead of making a wise resolve, have begun to wonder that so heavy a judgment should be denounced merely against Forgetfulness.

But look at the affairs of common life, and be taught by them. Do not neglect, and want of attention, and not looking about us to see

what we have to do—do not any of these bring upon us consequences, as ruinous to our worldly business as any ACTIVE misbehaviour? It is an event of every day, that a man, by mere laziness and inattention to his business, does as certainly bring himself and family to poverty and end his days in a goal, as if he were, in wanton mischief, to set fire to his own house. So it is also with the affairs of the soul: neglect of that—forgetfulness of God, who only can save it, will work his ruin, as surely as a long and daring course of profligate wickedness.

When any one has been recollecting the proper proofs of a future state of rewards and punishments, nothing methinks can give him so sensible an apprehension of punishment or such a representation of it to the mind, as observing, that, after the many disregarded checks, admonitions, and warnings, which people meet with in the ways of vice, folly, and extravagance—warnings from their very nature, from the examples of others, from the lesser inconveniences which they bring upon themselves, from the instructions of wise and good men—after these have been long despised, scorned, ridiculed—after the chief bad consequences (temporal consequences) of their follies have been delayed for a great while—at length they

break in irresistibly like an armed force: repentance is too late to relieve, and can serve only to aggravate their distress: the case is become desperate; and poverty and sickness, remorse and anguish, infamy and death, the effects of their own doings, overwhelm them beyond possibility of remedy or escape. This is an account of what is, in fact, the general constitution of nature.

But is the Forgetfulness of God so light a matter? Think what ingratitude, rebellion, and atheism there is at the bottom of it! Sirs, you have *a carnal mind, which is enmity against God* (Rom. viii. 7). Do not suppose that you have but to make a slight effort, and you will cease to forget him: it is your nature to forget him: it is your nature to hate him: so that nothing less than an entire change of heart and nature, will ever deliver you from this state of enmity. Our nature *is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. They, that are in the flesh, cannot please God* (Rom. viii. 7, 8). From this state, let the fearful menace in the text persuade you to arise! Need we remind you again of the dreadfulness of hell—of the certainty that it shall overtake the impenitent sinner? Enough has been said; and can any of you be still so hardened, and such enemies to your souls, as still to cleave to sin? Will you

still venture to continue any more in the hazard of falling into the hands of God? Alas! *Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* (Is. xxxiii. 14). *Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it!* (Ezek. xxii. 14). Observe, that men have dealt with sinners—ministers have dealt with them—apostles, prophets, and angels have dealt with them: at last, God will take them in hand, and deal with them! Though not so daring as to defy God, yet, Brethren, in all probability you put off repentance. Will you securely walk a little longer along the brinks of the burning furnace of the Almighty's fury? *As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between thee and death!* (1 Sam. xx. 3). When you lie down, you know not but you may be in it before the morning; and when you rise, you know not but God may say, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee!* When once the word is given to cut you down, the business is over. You are cut off from your lying refuges and beloved sins—from the world—from your friends—from the light—from happiness—from hope, for ever! Be wise then, my friends, and reasonable: give neither sleep

to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till you have resolved, on your knees before God, to forget him no more. Go home and pray. Do not dare to fly, as it were, in the face of your Maker, by seeking your pleasure on his holy day: but if you are alarmed at this subject, as well you may be, go and pray to God that you may forget him no more. It is high time to awake out of sleep. It is high time to have done with hesitation: time does not wait for you; nor will God wait till you are pleased to turn. He hath bent his bow, and made it ready: halt no more between two opinions: hasten—tarry not in all the plain, but flee from the wrath to come. Pray for grace, without which you can do nothing. Pray for the knowledge of Christ, and of your own danger and helplessness without which you cannot know what it is to find refuge in him. It is not our design to terrify, without pointing out the means of safety. Let us then observe, that if it should have pleased God to awaken any of you to a sense of your danger, you should beware of betaking yourselves to a refuge of lies.

But, through the mercy of God, many among us have found repentance unto life—have fled for refuge, to the hope set before them—have seen their danger, and fled to Christ. Think with yourselves what it is now to have escaped

destruction; what it will be to hear at the Last Day our acquittal, when it shall be said to others, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.* Let the sense of the mercy of God gild all the path of life. On the other hand, since it is they who forget God that are to bear the weight of his wrath, let us beware, Brethren, how we forget him, through concern about this world, or through unbelief, or through sloth. Let us be punctual in all our engagements with him. With earnest attention and holy awe ought we to hear his voice, cherish the sense of his presence, and perform the duties of his worship. No covenant relation, or Gospel grace can render him less holy, less jealous, or less majestic. *Wherefore let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.*

# SERMON VI.

## THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE HEART.

JEREMIAH XVII. 9.

*The heart is deceitful above all things.*

I. In what is here said concerning the deceitfulness of the human heart, it is supposed that there are MANY OTHER THINGS IN THE WORLD DECEITFUL: and very little experience is sufficient to convince us that the supposition is not without ground.

1. Men are deceivers. There is no man so wary and cautious in his dealings with his fellow-creatures, but he has found himself, at one time or other, over-reached. In all matters of exchange, buying and selling, lending money and paying it, labour and the remuneration for labour, there is generally a trial of skill on each side, which shall get the better of the other; and if their respective claims are

finally adjusted, and they come to a fair agreement, it is rather because one is not an overmatch for the other, than because they wish that each should have his due. Fraud is not confined to the lower orders of men: great men also can be great deceivers: they make promises, and excite expectations; and when the time of fulfilment is come, it turns out that they meant nothing. Such is the state of things in society. The arm of brutal force being tied up by law, men endeavour to satisfy their greedy appetites by practising deceits.

2. There are other things in the world that deceive, but not intentionally, such as RICHES, and PLEASURE, and HONOUR. They never promise any thing: but we will have it that they do. We will give them a name, which, though they disown it, we obstinately persist in giving: and we continue calling them by their wrong names, and reasoning from fictitious premises; till, finding ourselves mistaken in the end, we call them deceivers.

In this sense, Riches deceive. We imagine that riches will do every thing for us; and fancy that he that has wealth equal to his wishes, is in want of nothing. *Yet riches* can *take to themselves wings and fly away;* and leave their possessor with more wants than at first, and less ability to supply them. Or if they remain

with him, it is seldom seen that he is happier than before, if so much so. Our desires multiply with the means of gratifying them; so that the rich man does not so much taste new pleasures, as provide for new wants.

3. There are some things that deceive us, which are neither in their nature fallacious, nor such as we wish to be deceived about—things in which we mistake through the defectiveness of our judgment: for instance, the PROVIDENCE OF GOD. We expect that he will act in some particular way, not considering that he may have ends in view which are entirely unconnected with us, or with any thing that we have heard: so we often find that he acts quite otherwise than we expected, and we are in consequence deceived.

From a similar source, namely, our imperfection, arise those frequent disappointments which we meet with in our projects: our unwieldy schemes, in the course of time, come to nothing, because, with all our sagacity, we know nothing of the future. Hence also we form erroneous opinions of others: we have thought highly of some, whom we now know we are deceived in: we have condemned others, whom time has proved to be upright persons and our best friends. So liable are we to be imposed upon by appearances!

II. But let all outward things deceive us in what form or to what extent they may, A MAN'S OWN HEART OUTDOES THEM ALL IN DUPLICITY.

1. The HEART IS ONE OF THE THINGS THE LEAST KNOWN AMONG MEN. God has given them some account of it, and they profess to believe the Word of God without reservation; but they hesitate to give their assent to all that is said against the Heart. The course of things in the world corroborates the divine testimony concerning our depravity: wickedness generally prevails: general wickedness can be only the aggregate of the wickedness of each individual; and each individual crime must be owing to something within him: thus legitimate reasoning conducts us to the depravity of the heart. Yet men will not admit the conclusion, though they acknowledge the premises; except, indeed, they can do it without implicating themselves. Thus it is often remarked that such a man must have a bad heart who could act in such a way; but they will not allow that their own bad actions must be owing to some evil in their hearts.

As men, in general, are ignorant of their depravity, so each man is blind to his own particular failings; that is, to a paticular propensity of the heart which seems its most

prominent feature, and characterizes the man. Other men can see when we are covetous, but we cannot see it ourselves.

Sometimes, however, we do believe what men say of us; and that is, when they flatter us. At such times, the heart succeeds so completely in hiding our defects from us, that we can believe any thing that is said in our praise. There is reason to think, that each man is naturally sunk into such a depth of absurdity as to believe, after comparing himself with others, and making allowances for the disadvantages attending his situation and circumstances, that the overplus of merit rests solely with himself.

It is humiliating to find what a deficiency of self-knowledge there is in others, who, of all men in the world, ought to know themselves best—those whom God, by his grace, hath called to knowledge and virtue.

This self-deception appears in many of our habits and opinions. We judge one another uncharitably; often unmercifully. Looking to the right hand and to the left of the Church of God, we observe how foolish is this, and how wrong is that: not considering, that what others do, they may do to the Lord, as well as we who leave it undone; and, that what they leave undone, they do it so to the Lord, as well as

we who do it (Rom. xiv. 6). We are not now speaking of the sin of judging; but rather of the deceitfulness of the heart, in not letting us see the sinfulness of a censorious temper. We acknowledge that we must not judge, lest we be judged: yet we are always doing it—why? because we are so abominably proud: there is a secret belief that though it would be wrong in others to judge, we are privileged to do so, from our knowledge and general correctness.

The heart is never more deceitful, than in the report which it gives of our progress in Christian Virtues.

It tells us, for instance, that we have Zeal; which zeal is often no other than bitterness and ill temper. We are violent against the misconduct of others; not because they have sinned against God, but because they trouble and interfere with ourselves. We are zealous for Christ, and the spread of his Gospel; but cannot rejoice if the work be not done by ourselves and friends: nay, are often so wicked as to wish the work may not be done at all, if it cannot be done in our own way. Now if our zeal is of this nature, it is evidently pure worldliness. It is possible, nay, it is very easy, for our religious attachments to become in time so confined, that we shall seek

the good of those of our own communion, with no higher motive than men seek to aggrandize their families and connections; and, consequently, without any exercise of grace at all: yet our hearts will be telling us all the while that we are zealous for God.

We often think that we have Love, when we have none. *If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye?* (Luke vi. 32). If we can love those only who think with us, we do no more than every worldly man does: all friendships are formed in this way: similarity of sentiments, in politics or literature, brings men together—leaves no room for dissention—and is a reciprocal acknowledgement of each other's discernment. But Christian Love is quite another thing: it needs not the impulse of selfish motives, but feels the attractive influence of the object: it cares not where that object exists: if there be any thing truly lovely in persons who even despise and ill treat us, we shall love it in spite of all: we shall open our way to the pearl, in spite of the tenacity of the shell. If this be Love, how little of it exists! yet all lay claim to it: they must therefore deceive themselves.

There are other graces which we seem to see in ourselves, and are mistaken. Religious considerations sometimes appear so pleasant

to us, that our hearts are full, and we speak to all of the Happiness of Religion. This we suppose must be Christian Experience—this is the Joy and Peace promised to the saints: which joy is more to be suspected than any other. It is very often no more than the animal spirits, elevated by something that pleases Self; and merely taking a tinge, a slight colouring, from religion. Rejoice in tribulation, with a sick and dying body, destitute of friends, temporal comforts, and all other aids to cheerfulness; or rejoice when your will is contradicted, and you are put to great inconvenience—and we will readily grant that your joy is genuine: but, in most other cases, it is very much to be suspected.

The heart very often makes use of the Bodily Constitutions of men, to impose upon them. Many give themselves credit for being humble and sober, because the constitution, being naturally sedate, has no tendency to lead them into excesses to which ardent tempers are prone. Others impetuously carry all before them, and despise the rest for want of zeal; whereas their own zeal is no more than the heat of their blood. If we would take the measure of our progress in those tempers to which our natural constitutions are most averse, we should more justly appreciate our real cha-

racter. It is by pursuing the opposite method, that we fall into mistakes.

Thus are saints, as well as sinners, greatly deceived in many important particulars. Now no outward things practise fraud upon us. In the creation of God, there is nothing which is not subjected to rules, by virtue of which all things continue as they were from the creation: above all, God's Word remains the standard of truth: yet we are constantly deceived. It is evident, therefore, that there is a principle of delusion within—the Heart must be a deceiver.

2. We have next to shew that *the Heart is deceitful* ABOVE ALL THINGS.

Powers of deceit may be estimated in various ways; but chiefly, like other powers, by the effects which they are able to produce Deeper policy is necessary to defraud a man of his estate, than to deprive him of his garment; and deeper still, to change a dynasty Now the heart, if left quietly to weave its own web, will never leave off till it brings out death: nothing less than the everlasting ruin of both body and soul is the result of its machinations, if it be allowed to complete them. Men exhaust their powers of invective against the enemy of our nation, and stand aghast at the unexampled success of his plans; but they have within their own breasts a foe more insi-

dious; one, whose scheme, if matured, will bring upon them far more extensive mischiefs. For what can the craftiest politicians of this world do, but alter somewhat of the form of things, and vary what God intended should be varied? But the operations of the heart are connected with the destinies of eternity: if it fail, the soul may dwell with the angels, itself a companion for them: if it succeed, the soul sinks to hell, to be for ever with the devils. And all this it does purely by fraud! The potentates of the earth find Power, either actually brought into action or exhibited to intimidate, necessary to the execution of their schemes; but the heart uses no instrument but Deceit. When the soul is lost, it does not fall the victim of violence, but goes as a willing subject.

If the heart did not practise its deceits to the extent that it does, if it deceived us no more than other things do, it deserves to be called the Chief Deceiver, for being able to do before our own eyes that for which others require distance and concealment. It is certainly more uncommon, when we mistake the character of persons whom we live with, whom we converse with from day to day, whom we have known for years and observed in a great variety of situations, than the character of those who seldom come under our notice:

persons who can wear a mask in such circumstances, and not be discovered, are certainly finished hypocrites. What then must we think of the Heart, which we have always with us, and may inspect when we please? The occurrence of outward events is not necessary in order to put it into a new position, so as to enable us to view it in a different aspect. We can suppose cases; and imaginary circumstances will be almost as true a list of the state of the heart, as real. Thus we have abundant means of discovering its bent and purposes: yet, after all, it remains in a great measure unknown.

The Word of God is given to us, to serve as a rule to shew the heart's obliquities—a line to fathom its depths—a clue to guide us through its labyrinths—a fire to try its nature: yet it remains unknown!

The Word of God puts us on our guard against the deceiver: it has given it a stigma, that we may learn it: it mentions some of its wiles; holds up, as warnings, persons who have been duped; and roundly asserts that *he that trusteth his own heart is a fool* (Prov. xxviii. 26). Other deceivers, if they found the ground thus pre-occupied and measures taken for their reception, would despair of attempting any thing with success; but the heart sports in

its own deceivings: it lays its plots at leisure, and is confident of escaping detection. *Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird* (Prov. i. 17). The silly animal sees what is doing, yet flies as soon as possible into danger. Thus it is with man. He seems bereft of reason when the heart exerts its influence: so superior is its skill and ingenuity, and so irresistible its fascinations.

It is still more extraordinary, that, after we ourselves have had trial of the falsehood and treachery of our own hearts, as well as been warned of what others have suffered in this way, we should still listen with credulity to its tales. In other cases, when any one has imposed upon us and is detected, we have done with him; or, if future intercourse be necessary, we take care to remember what sort of person we have to deal with. But the heart may deceive as often as it will, and we still continue to trust it.

Sometimes, however, we determine, in good earnest, to examine the heart: we are resolved to call it to account—to remain in ignorance no longer. We begin: not many minutes pass before we find ourselves thinking of something else, as remote from what was to be the subject of our thoughts, as the East is from the West: with such quickness and dexterity does

the heart produce something to amuse us, when we are seriously proceeding to business! We recollect ourselves, and go back to the work: the heart now begins to recommend delay: the proposed examination will take up time, and requires leisure: if we are in the city, we must wait till we are in the country: if surrounded by friends, we must stay till left more to ourselves: books must be read, and judicious friends consulted: no serious evil, it is conceived, will result from thus deferring the work for a season; for time will be adding to our knowledge, and we shall be more capacitated for a work of this nature.

The heart has all the deceitfulness of a tradesman whose affairs are involved; and for the same reason: it knows that if its true state be once known, its credit and influence are gone. The tradesman, whose affairs are in confusion, is averse to nothing so much as balancing accounts and settling them: he will have a thousand reasons to produce, why it had better not be done just now: certain accounts must be called in—letters written—such and such persons seen before the thing can be done; and, all the while, he has no intention of bringing matters to an issue—he is merely gaining time: if one look into his books, there appears nothing but

confusion—things omitted that ought to have been set down, and things standing that ought to have been crossed. Thus, when we take a first view of the heart, all is chaos and disorder: it is a thing unfolding itself, wheel within wheel: it is a wilderness, which we know not how to get through, or where to enter: we know not what to think of our own thoughts and our own tempers—what is nature, and what is grace—what sins are unto death, and what are merely infirmities: we are at a loss to conduct the process of self-examination; and the utmost that we are able to do in general is, to ascertain a few facts respecting our state, without being able to come at a comprehensive view of it; and all this because the heart throws into the back ground what ought to be seen, and presents only the unmeaning features; and whatever exhibition it makes, its object is to misrepresent.

It will be thought, by some, that the heart cannot be thus deceitful, when Divine Grace has changed it. In proportion to our grace, no doubt, will be our sincerity and self-knowledge: but St. Paul had such conviction of the deceitfulness of his heart, that, in that place where he warns us against judging others, he tells us, he could not so much as take upon him to judge himself; for though he was con-

scious of no allowed sin, there might be many things in his heart of which he knew nothing (1 Cor. iv. 3, 4).

III. During this discussion it must have been a thought, suggesting itself continually to you, that the heart is under Satanic influence. This is to be inferred, not from the deceitfulness of the heart, but from its always exercising its powers to such a mischievous purpose. It is almost a necessary supposition, that an external agent must be concerned—one who perverts all the faculties of the soul to effect its final ruin. Let this, then, be the First Inference from the text, that we have from experience, some strong evidences of the scripture doctrine of Satanic agency.

The next Reflection that we suggest to the believer is, that he may now understand why *Christ is of God, made unto us wisdom* (1 Cor. i. 30). For how impossible is it to conceive that creatures, so miserably apt to be deluded as we are, should ever be able to extricate ourselves from the snares laid for us by the combined wisdom and wickedness of the devil and the world, with a breast more treacherous than either, were we not led aright, by some invisible hand! Christ, blessed be his name, is an overmatch for the heart: though it were furnished with all the

engines of hell, he can defeat its stratagems and traverse its plans; and he will do so for his people—he will deliver us *out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock, and establish our goings* (Ps. xl. 2). He has given us his Spirit to be a Spirit of wisdom —a Spirit which enables us to descend into the depths of the heart, and leads us into some of its darkest caverns—a Spirit, which, by revealing Jesus, makes us no longer afraid to look at ourselves, or to confess before God our secret wickedness. In this way the heart becomes known and purified: it is renewed in its nature, and becomes the abode of sincerity and truth.

Christ, therefore, and his promised Spirit, is the remedy of every evil which we proclaim to men—to you, who, without Him, will fall a prey to your own wicked and deceitful hearts. Those gangrenes are eating their way; and will continue to gain ground, till the whole mass is overspread and becomes ripe for destruction. Oh, then, think of your danger! What though you turn away from the sight of your heart, doth not God know it? *He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?* (Ps. xciv. 9). The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men; and however pure and immaculate your lives may be, he will call you into judgment for the sin of your hearts. Learn, then,

where true religion must begin. Mortify the desires of your heart—oppose its inclinations—thwart its purposes: above all, pray against its deceits, and yield it up entirely to Christ. Under his care it will become honest, upright, pure; and be changed from a flattering foe to a wise and faithful monitor.

# SERMON VII.

## TRIBULATION THE WAY TO THE KINGDOM.

ACTS XIV. 22.

*We must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God.*

In comparing the state of the children of God with that of the ungodly, with a view of ascertaining which of them suffer most in the world, no account must be taken of the common calamities which are incident to mortality, such as sickness, poverty, and death, for these fall to their lot equally. Those sufferings alone are to be noticed, which are peculiar to each.

The sufferings peculiar to the ungodly are those, which are occasioned by the uninterrupted prevalence of sin in the heart; unsubdued pride, love of the world, inordinate selfishness: these create perpetual disappointments and restless anxiety. The sufferings peculiar to the godly are those, which owe

their origin to the remains of sin in them: self-will, intent upon its object, encounters the Spirit of God: and because we strive where we ought to yield, a heart-rending conflict ensues; a conflict by so much the more difficult to be borne, as the feelings of the heart after conversion possess greater sensibility than before: to these are to be added the trials which they meet with from Satan and a persecuting world.

We do not question which, upon the whole, are the most happy in this world, because the Scripture has decided that *there is no peace to the wicked;* whereas *Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is,* as well as *of that which is to come* (1 Tim. iv. 8): and the reason is, that the righteous have something within to counterbalance their afflictions and convert them into benefits; while the unrighteous have nothing correspondent to this, under their calamities: there is, therefore, no question about this.

But if the afflictions that befal the righteous and the wicked be compared, without taking into account the resources which they may respectively have, it will be perhaps difficult to decide which suffer most. Nor, indeed, is a decision necessary: for no man, anxious for salvation, would think of suspending his judgment upon the determination of this question;

but rather judge that the Kingdom of Heaven must be entered at all events, whether more or less of tribulation is to be encountered in the way to it.

When therefore the Apostle exhorted the persecuted disciples to bear in mind, that through much tribulation they should enter into the kingdom, he did not thereby intimate that a godly life was necessarily attended with more trouble upon the whole than a wicked one; for we rather change our troubles than increase them: but only meant to forewarn them of what was to be expected, lest the trials attending their Christian Profession should offend them; that though they were the favourites of God and under his government, they should nevertheless meet with much tribulation.

I. We will endeavour, with the Divine Blessing, to shew the truth of the Apostle's words, or that NECESSITY of which he speaks; and then point out the Grounds of that necessity.

That those who are saved *must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom,* appears evident from these considerations—that, from matter of fact, it always has been so—from the nature of our circumstances, it is likely it should

be so—and, from the appointment of God, it cannot be otherwise.

1. From MATTER OF FACT it appears to have been always so.

As the history of mankind, in general, is justly observed to be only the catalogue of their crimes, so the history of the people of God is a narrative of their sufferings for righteousness' sake.

Abel, the first saint that died, brought upon himself a violent death, only by offering an acceptable sacrifice. Though the piety of Noah proved his preservation, yet, during the long period of one hundred and twenty years, while the Ark was building in obedience to God, he was no doubt exposed to the severest trials of his faith and patience, amidst the ridicule of such a vast majority of contemptuous sinners. Abraham, the friend of God, was called to many sacrifices painful to human nature: to be obliged, as he was at the beginning, to abandon his home, and go forth he knew not whither, is a trial which we shall best appreciate by placing ourselves in similar circumstances; and by conceiving ourselves called to abandon a spot, to which we are attached by every tender tie, to go to sojourn in a foreign land: yet, even in Canaan, he was not suffered to enjoy those comforts of a permanent establish-

ment, which next to grandeur we are so apt to idolize: when we consider these things, and think of that deepest wound to his feelings, the command to offer up his Son, it is to be concluded, that, with all his riches and prosperity, he found the days of the years of his pilgrimage to be full of trouble. Lot, his nephew, was long subject to another trial, very distressing to a good man: his righteous soul was vexed from day to day by the filthy conversation of the wicked, among whom he dwelt. The sufferings, which all these holy men underwent, were such as they would have escaped, had they not been saints—such as they might have eluded, had they chosen to disobey God. Thus also Joseph, for his purity and integrity, incurred disgrace, imprisonment, and almost death. Job, for the trial of his uprightness, was subjected to the dreadful scourges of Satan; and suffered the loss of his property, family, health of body, and peace of mind, all at once. And because Moses chose to endure affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin, affliction he did endure! for, partly from the murmurs of the stiff-necked people and the care of governing them, and partly from the displeasure of God testified against his passionate words which would have passed unnoticed had he not been an eminent

saint, he must have found his passage through the world as toilsome as his pilgrimage through the wilderness. And what shall I more say, for the time would fail me to tell of David, and Samuel, and of the Prophets; who, if they were eminent examples of faith, were also of tribulation, and the trial of faith.

The people of God were frequently the objects of persecution, in the times immediately preceding the coming of Christ. Such were the persecutions by Antiochus Epiphanes, when thousands were murdered, because they would not forsake the Law of God. *Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourging, yea moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned: they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented: they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth* (Heb. xi. 36—38).

Nor were the saints of the New Testament Dispensation exempt from suffering. Could not St. Paul, when he spoke the words of the Text, testify the truth of it from his own painful experience, who was *in stripes above measure—in prisons frequent, in deaths oft*—scourged, stoned, shipwrecked—*in journeying often, in perils of waters, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings*

*often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness?* (2 Cor. xi. 23—27.)

Such were the lives of the Apostles! of whom every one but John was taken off by a violent death: and the Christians, spoken of and written to in the New Testament, were evidently partakers of their tribulation. Scarcely is there a single Epistle, in which affliction is not supposed or expressed. And St. Peter tells the *elect strangers*, that their case was not singular—*Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world,* (1 Pet. v. 9). So St. John: *I John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ* (Rev. i. 9).

With respect to the Christian Believers in after ages, wherever the secular historian notices them the Church comes forward to view, almost always, in a suffering condition. Whereever the experience of a private saint happens to be communicated to us, he appears as a subject of sorrows; and, though there were times when the Visible Church enjoyed the sunshine of temporal prosperity, yet even then the true followers of Christ were, in all probability, no strangers to secret sorrows: for, as we proceed to notice in the next place,

2. It is likely, from THE NATURE OF OUR

CONDITION IN THIS WORLD, that all should, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom.

The mere theoretical moralist, who descants on the happiness of the good man as if he were an angel, not taking into consideration the corruption of human nature, will describe him as too elevated in his views to be endangered by the body—too amiable in his conduct, to be persecuted by his fellow-creatures—too firm in his resolutions, to yield to Satan. But the real condition of the Christian in the world, is sufficient to prove that picture to be drawn by fancy: because, though pure, so far as he is renewed in the spirit of his mind, he finds *another law in his members warring against the law of his mind:* and, again, though holy in all his conduct, he is among creatures who have no taste for holiness: and, though he is finally victorious over Satan, he is often worsted in the interim.

It is no more than likely, then, that, from his flesh, or the corrupted part of his nature, the child of God should go through much tribulation: it is likely that he should, at times, be the subject of evil tempers; and that he should be betrayed into rash and passionate language, and be guilty of unbecoming selfishness, instead of observing what is lovely and of good report—that he should be at times careless and irreve-

rent in prayer—find strong reluctance to spiritual duties and the keeping of his heart with diligence—that he should, through fear or carelessness, be betrayed into a sinful conformity to the world, or dissimulate before them—that he should be apt to be impatient in sickness, distress of circumstances, loss of friends, or other common calamities of life—that there should be times when he would fear that he had lost all happiness, by having renounced the world—and what is worse, after all these things that he should remain, for a considerable time, hard-hearted and unfeeling at the recollection of them.

This is tribulation! for sin, in its nature and consequences, is grievous to the children of God; but especially that sin which exists in themselves. When they remember how their sin casts a veil over the light of God's countenance, grieves the Holy Spirit, and crucifies the Son of God—how it sometimes brings a reproach upon their holy faith, and an occasion to the enemies to blaspheme—how it defiles their souls, and checks their advances in the divine life—their reflections upon their own sinfulness are accompanied with the keenest remorse. Or, if they should find themselves convinced of sin, yet incapable of sorrowing for it after a godly sort—which is often the

case, as the effect of sin is to harden the heart—then is their anguish extreme: for the chief relief to a good man, after the commission of evil, is to be able to weep and mourn—to loath and abhor himself before God, with a broken and contrite spirit.

These are some of the severest trials which we feel, because all these originate from ourselves—ourselves are to blame: and, from that consideration, arises the remorse of a self-accusing conscience.

But other trials are to be expected from the world, who are enemies to God on account of his holiness, and will therefore be so to his people on the same account. Is it then to be wondered at, Christian Brethren, that the world which lieth in wickedness should contribute to our tribulation? No: *Marvel not*, saith St. John, *if the world hate you:* you have no reason to be surprised at it. If we testify of the world that its works are evil, and they are so ignorant as not to see the sterling excellency of a godly character, and have naturally such bad dispositions as we are taught that all men have by nature, can we expect aught else from them but dislike and contempt? May we not naturally suppose that they will, at times, give vent to their dislike of Christian seriousness, by the satirical smile or disdainful sneer?

—that they should watch our words and actions, to ensnare us, and misrepresent the most innocent of them?—that they should carp and slander, and speak evil of our good, and magnify our infirmities with cruel pleasure? You know how they treated our Lord with all his amiableness and wisdom—what may not be expected, after this? Nay, is it not rather a wonder, that the enemies of the Church of Christ in different countries, when in possession of secular power, should be so mild and moderate as they are? It were far more probable that the faggot should be flaming at the stake all day, and the axe of the executioner ever reeking with the blood of the saints. We are, therefore, *not to think it strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try us, as though some strange thing happened unto us* (1 Pet. iv. 12); but to regard it as a natural and necessary consequence of existing causes, that we should enter into the kingdom through much tribulation from the world.

Again, when we consider the power and purposes of Satan—how he cruelly labours for the ruin of men, and will maliciously harass those whom he cannot destroy—how he had skill sufficient to deceive our first parents in their innocence, and madness enough to tempt the immaculate Son of God—say, Tempted

Brethren, was it to be expected, that he should let any of you pass unmolested through your course? Is he too busy in practising upon others, to have leisure to attend to you? or does he account your soul too worthless to repay his pains? None of these things can be. It is, therefore, fully to be expected, that there should be certain moments in a believer's life when Satan is at hand. It shall be, that the tempter stands by us when we pray, and supplies plentiful occasions of distraction, and helps us to exchange a word with every passing thought. Now that this invisible enemy is to be seen by the eye of faith, we may know whence it is that the heart is startled at the blasphemous thought which it finds constantly recurring, and why it trembles to pray lest it should involuntarily think of some monstrous wickedness; for these are *fiery darts* which may be looked for from so foul a foe. From the same source we may expect to be harassed with hard thoughts of God, difficulty in believing his promises, and all the perplexing train of doubts, and fears, and groundless suspicions.

Wherefore, from the united consideration of all these things, we may infer that there is a high probability of our entering into the Kingdom of God through much tribulation.

3. But, lastly, from THE PURPOSE OF GOD, we are to understand that it must be so.

Whatever the reason may be, God has certainly determined that his people shall suffer in this world. *I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people*, said the Lord to Jerusalem (Zeph. iii. 12). Whether their afflictions come immediately from his hand, or through the instrumentality of others, it is immaterial: for God is not taken by surprise by any thing that happens to his people; and therefore if he gives them warning of any thing that shall befal them, that shall befal them because he has forewarned them. Hence all that our Saviour predicts concerning the sufferings of his people, is a proof of what is God's determination respecting them. And what did he say on this subject? *In the world ye shall have tribulation. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.* Paul was to be told on his conversion, not how great things he must DO, but how great things he must *suffer* for Christ's sake (Acts ix. 16). Neither did the Apostles hesitate to tell the people what would be the inevitable consequence of being believers: *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution* (2 Tim. iii. 12). And, accordingly, when the Thessalonians had actual experience of the truth of these predic-

tions, he exhorts them not to be *moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto: for, verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know* (1 Thess. iii. 3, 4).

Affliction, then, is our necessary portion; and is the badge by which, next to the blood of Christ, saints are known in heaven. *What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest; and he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb* (Rev. vii. 13, 14).

Let us, therefore, be aware, that, as *affliction cometh not forth of the dust*, so it is a settled affair in the counsels of God, that tribulation, in one form or other, shall be the lot of his people: not, however, that their lives shall be spangled over with brilliant occurrences, the retrospect of which might flatter their pride; but attended with such circumstances as, though not interesting in the narrative, are very painful in experience.

II. Respecting the Reasons of this appointment, we have no right to expect any information: for, to every impatient question this answer

may be given—*Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God!* and much more, "Nay, but O sinner, &c." *Be still, and know that I am God.* God's sovereignty is sufficient to silence all objections. Man, as a creature has no right to complain—man, as a sinner, in disgrace, should shut his mouth for ever.

Yet, since God hath first spoken and opened his mind, we may proceed, from Scripture, humbly to inquire, in the second place, into the REASONABLENESS of this appointment.

1. Here let us remark, in the first place, that no harm shall ever come to us from tribulation. It shall never separate us from the love of Christ: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors!* (Rom. viii. 35, 37). Again, the Lord doth not permit or appoint our afflictions, because he takes pleasure in them; for *He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men* (Lam. iii. 33): nay, so far from this, St. James, after bidding us take the Prophets as an example of suffering affliction, adds, *Ye have seen the end of the Lord*—under what character the Lord appears at last—how benign his aspect, when the clouds break, and we discover his purpose—*that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy* (James v. 11). For our further satisfac-

tion it is told us, *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able* (1 Cor. x. 13): the same truth is expressed in Isaiah, 27th chap. 8th verse, *In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind, in the day of the east wind*—he does not permit them ordinarily to blow together. And what is better still, he has given us a Saviour to sympathize with us in all our distress and tribulation which we endure: thus it is said of the Israelites of old, *In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them.....and carried them all the days of old* (Is. lxiii. 9). The same kind friend is our's: for *we have not a High Priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are* (Heb. iv. 15).

But still the question is not answered, "Why doth God afflict his people?"

We answer, that it is chiefly to make them holy—to restore that image, which we lost in Adam; and so to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. "But why cannot this end be accomplished without affliction? Why might it not be attained in the way of prosperity and innocent pleasure?" to this we must say, that the Spirit of God is certainly not confined to any particular means

in the execution of his designs; and might, therefore, if he pleased, make worldly prosperity the instrument of our sanctification: but he chooses to make his dispensations of grace analogous, in a certain degree, to his operations in nature: hence, because affliction has a natural tendency to improve our behaviour—as it often takes from the proud man some of his pride, as it did Nebuchadnezzar's; and from the worldly-minded some of his love of the world; and teaches the hard-hearted pity and compassion, without, however, changing the heart—the Spirit of God is pleased to employ affliction as an instrument in his great work. This may tend to reconcile the children of God to the mode of treatment, in general, which is employed toward them.

Let us therefore consider, by a reference to their own experience, how the proposed end is actually attained by it.

1. One of the first benefits derived to us from sanctified affliction, is a SUBMISSIVE SPIRIT: *Tribulation worketh patience.*

The pride and arrogance of our hearts, and their stubborn contradiction to the will of God, are little known to us in prosperity: while things continue to smile upon us, and the train of events of each day is for the most part agreeable, our rebellious disposition lies quiet: we suppose

ourselves pleased with God, because his Providence is such as pleases us. But, when we are brought under the stroke of real affliction, and become subjects of those dispensations which are not only in some respects unpleasant but are wholly contradictory to our flesh and such as no contrivances will enable us to alleviate, the latent self-will begins to stir, and the soul will be torne with raging discontent, till we make up our mind to submit.

A really afflictive dispensation, which is intended for our good, is that, in which there are little or no counterbalancing pleasures—that, from which there appears no outlet, or a very distant one: for, in such cases, the only way left for the soul to find peace in is, to lie down in quietness. As, in the taming of a wild beast, his struggles only bring upon him greater force and harder usage, but, when he yields, he is left to rest; so, while the soul is under the discipline of God, its shortest way to peace, according to the constitution of things, is to submit to the treatment which God sees necessary.

Submission like this is an exercise, and therefore an improvement, of a submissive spirit; when we are patient, not from the hope of a speedy deliverance, or because we have discovered some alleviating circumstances, but from the consideration that God has appointed

it. Affliction, by being accompanied with such circumstances as to leave us no alternative but to be patient or else miserable, has a most powerful tendency, through the agency of the Spirit, to reduce our rebellious tempers to a disposition which becomes creatures: and the acquisition of such a temper we suppose indispensably necessary for one, who is to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

This, then, is one use of tribulation—to make us come down from the place of God to that of creatures—to sink our haughty spirits into profound self-abasement upon earth; that, in heaven, we may have no will left, but to do the will of God.

2. Another use of tribulation is to make us HEAVENLY MINDED.

*Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;* neither will the carnal mind find aught to gratify it in heaven. It is a spiritual place, and its enjoyments are fitted for pure spirits. We must, therefore, acquire a taste for spiritual pleasures, before we can be fit for the kingdom of God. This taste cannot be formed, unless we meditate on them with frequency and affection: we cannot meditate on them, till we cease to idolize earthly things: and this, alas! it is to be feared, we shall not cease to do, till the world is embittered to us, in some way or other. But when we have learned, by

mournful experience, the vanity of the creature, then the soul, which has been quickened with Christ by regeneration and raised up with him to sit in heavenly places, launches far away in contemplation of the glories of another world. Oh, how ardent its faith!—how strong and vivid its desires!—how does it breathe after God, and struggle to escape from the entanglements of time and sense, that it may breathe a purer air and hold communion with God! *Oh, that I had wings like a dove*, says the persecuted Psalmist, *then would I flee away and be at rest.*

"Since it pleases God," the afflicted saint will say, "to make it a thorny path to me, and my way to lie through a howling wilderness—since he hath made my dearest enjoyments short-lived, and caused my fondest schemes to end in disappointment—since the friends, and connections, and situation, and circumstances, which I looked forward to in earlier life, as desirable above all things, have rather proved occasions of sorrow—since the selfishness of some, the ingratitude of others, and the persecuting dispositions of the ungodly world, added to my inward trials and temptations, leave me but little comfort in this life—henceforth I will live for another world: from the harassing vexations that assail me, I will flee to the bosom of Him, who will be to me as

*a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land* (Is. xxxii. 2). Blessed be God, that he has left so little on earth to enchain my affections—that he has said to me, by all these afflictions, *Arise, for this is not thy rest:* henceforth, therefore, I desire to live as a stranger and pilgrim upon earth, looking at something beyond the present scene: my heart and affections shall dwell with Christ, in fairer worlds on high: *there the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary be at rest*" (Job iii. 17).

Thus is devotion purified—hope enlivened—faith made more active—and all the affections more spiritual, by means of sanctified affliction. There is a spirituality, an unction, a divine power pervading the prayers and conversation of a suffering saint, which mere knowledge or sound understanding, brilliancy of imagination or enthusiastic raptures, may imitate, but cannot express.

3. Tribulation has a yet further use, in STRENGTHENING OUR SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

Union to Christ, and communion with him, are the main stamina of the soul—the secret springs of that life, the continuance of which appears to most men so unaccountable. He *is*

*made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption* (1 Cor. i. 30); and in him we are to walk, rooted and grounded in him. Union to him we receive at our spiritual birth; but that communion with him and dependance on his grace, which ought to result from the union which subsists, we are slow to understand, and still more so to practise: we grope in the dark, seeking something to help us forward in the way of holiness; and take up with such as may come to hand, instead of abiding steadily in Christ. Hence, whatever has a tendency to keep Him before our minds, is of the highest importance to us.

Affliction may do this: for, as a person will naturally take great interest in those sufferings of others which correspond to his own, and the books which describe these and the persons who have felt them will possess a particular interest in his view; so the disciple of Christ will be disposed to look to his Master, and consider his example. In his life (for he was *a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief)* the suffering Christian will find something analogous to his own case: for *in all things* he was *made like unto his brethren—in all points* he was *tempted like as we are, yet without sin* (Heb. ii. 17; iv. 15). And though we may urge that our Lord could have had no conflict with sin, which may be per-

haps our severest trial; yet he determined to have the nearest experience of that too, which a spotless being could have—namely, by submitting to the temptations of Satan, by which means he became acquainted with our trials arising from corruption; for the suggestions of corruption and those of Satan are scarcely to be distinguished by the most discriminating judgments.

Finding, then, in Christ's sufferings, a counterpart of our own, we shall love to contemplate Him, and remark His conduct, His resignation and self-denial; and thus shall gradually acquire a similarity of sentiment, and a union of heart with the Blessed Jesus. Such consideration of the sufferings of Christ is itself an act of a life of faith upon him; but one exercise of it leads to another. While our sufferings keep Jesus and his sufferings in our view, we shall not be so apt to forget the nature and object of those sufferings of his: we shall rejoice to think that it was out of love to ourselves that he died for us—that as a reward for all he underwent as our surety, he has received an unmeasurable fulness of the Spirit for his people, especially his afflicted ones, who most need it: hence, we shall cast our souls with all their misery upon him—trust to his tender care for watching by us, while we are refining in the fur-

nace of affliction—and expect to receive grace to help us in every time of need.

Let it not be forgotten, on the other hand, that the suffering condition of his people is, of itself, a sufficient reason for Christ's looking down upon them with peculiar regard: even before they call, he answers—gives them patience—and comes, of his own accord, to bless them with extraordinary manifestations of his presence. *As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. As ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation* (2 Cor. i. 5, 7).

Upon the whole, then, it is certain that a state of tribulation improves our spiritual knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, by inducing an application to his grace, and by drawing down communications from his fulness.

Probably the experience of many of my hearers will suggest many other uses of affliction; but, with the three before-mentioned, we shall close, as considering them the most comprehensive and important.

III. Let us, before we conclude, ADDRESS the different persons who compose this assembly.

AFFLICTED BRETHREN! is it a sad necessity imposed upon us, that *we must, through much*

*tribulation, enter into the kingdom?* O no! if such be its precious effects, let us not be startled at affliction; nor provoke God to listen to our prayers for its premature removal. Be patient, therefore: and while nature pours out her complaints, use no undue method of being rid of your trouble; but be more anxious for the accomplishment of the purposes of affliction, than for the removal of it. Is it too much to require you to rejoice in it? the patient, who is assured of cure, does not act properly, who only resigns himself to the physician sullenly: he should do it with alacrity and joy; and thus you are exhorted by the Apostles to *glory in tribulation* (Rom. v. 3); to be *strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness* (Col. i. 11); to *count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations* (James i. 2); to *glory in infirmities* (2 Cor. xii. 5); *for unto you it is given, on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake* (Phil. i. 29). It is a high privilege to believe in him; but how much more to suffer for him?

After all the false dimensions which an exaggerating fancy, disordered by fear, will assign to our troubles, how small are they!—small indeed, for creatures escaped from hell! *For the sufferings of this present time are not worthy*

*to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!* (Rom. viii. 18). And *our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory* (2 Cor. iv. 17).

Because it has been said that tribulation is unavoidable, let not the INEXPERIENCED CHRISTIAN be discouraged, at being, in a great measure, a stranger to such trouble, as if his exemption were a proof of unsoundness; for God, in wisdom, permits us to be tried in proportion to our strength. Beware, therefore, of courting persecution, lest the cross which you bring upon yourself, you should be obliged to bear yourself: *by and by, tribulation or persecution* will arise *because of the word* (Mat. xiii. 21).

For the CARELESS part of my audience, this subject will possess little interest. They will say that this is to dress religion in a black attire, which she never meant to wear—that what they have heard has been probably dictated by misanthropic spleen, and written with a pen dipt deep in melancholy. They resolve, if they have any religion, that it shall be such as shall leave them in full possession of the pleasures of this world, for that is the amiable religion of our Saviour! But what says Christ? *Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn*

*and weep. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets* (Luke vi. 25, 26). Your exemption, therefore, from spiritual trouble, is a privilege by no means enviable. Not to mention the emptiness of carnal pleasure, let me ask, what are the reflections of persons on their death-bed? are they pleased at having declined the cross; and lived in vanity, and the favour of the world? No: they reflect, how much better it would have been to have fought bravely the battles of God; and, through the blood of opposing enemies, to have waded to a throne on high. Then consider the matter, Brethren. Sit down, and count the cost. Choose rather, through grace, to suffer tribulation with the people of God. Won by the love of Christ in suffering for you, be not unwilling to suffer a little for Him: so, when the sorrows of the world are beginning, yours shall end: when, with all the nations that forget God, they shall be turned into hell, you shall join the redeemed of the Lord, who shall return and come to Zion, with everlasting joy upon their heads: having passed through your tribulation, you shall see it no more: you shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

# SERMON VIII.

## THE CHRISTIAN WALK.

COLOSSIANS ii. 6.

*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.*

THE way in which a Christian Believer must walk in his passage through this world to the next, is a way which we are by no means apt to observe, or disposed to adhere to. It is new and singular in its nature: it cannot be identified with any other: in consequence of which, the wise, who would walk in it, must begin where the foolish do; and proceed, step by step, in ground constantly new; seeing nothing which past experience had made familiar to them. It requires, moreover, such vigilance and attention, such spiritual and elevated affections, such exercise of the inward faculties, and, withal, such simplicity, that we are too ignorant, too indolent, and too proud to discover this way of Christian Sanctification, and then to keep in it.

Hence, the saints and brethren at Colosse, though well spoken of, upon the whole, for their *faith in Christ Jesus* and their *love in the Spirit*, needed an exhortation on that head. They had been corrupted in some degree, or were in danger of becoming so, by the introduction of outward observances, or human methods of sanctification, instead of the simple way of living by faith in Christ. Their learned Heathen neighbours, drawing them into disputes on some difficult points, might make them ashamed of Christ Crucified; or, more probably, teachers, newly converted from Heathenism, might, through their imperfect views of the glory of the Gospel, attempt to garnish their doctrine with maxims and sentiments concerning morality, such as were most in vogue among the Heathen Literati at the time. There are certain men, who, because they possess somewhat more learning than others, think, when they become converts to the Gospel, that they are great acquisitions to the cause: they officiously extend the shield of their learning over their more unlearned brethren, and try to PROVE where others BELIEVE: but, while they think they promote the cause, they generally spoil what they touch. Therefore they are thus cautioned:—*Beware lest any man spoil you, through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of*

*men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ* (v. 8). Every part of true religion may be learnt new from the Bible. The Word of God, though it lends aid to other books, receives it from none.

Similar caution was added respecting those teachers among them that Judaized, or added Jewish observances to Christianity, with the desire of making their obedience complete. *Ye are complete in* HIM, they are told (v. 10). *Let no man therefore judge* or condemn *you in meat or drink, or in respect of a holy day* (v. 16). Let no man agitate your minds by charging you with neglects in these external observances: they were once necessary, but these are a shadow of things to come, but the body is Christ: therefore penances, fasts, and austerities, which are so valuable in the sight of the Heathens and form so large a part of corrupt Christianity, are now done away.

These were the prohibitions given them. The command and positive rule, laid down for their consistent walk and effectual sanctification, is to be seen in the text: *As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.*

Here are two important sentences—one discovering the beginning, the other the progress, of the Christian Life—one the gate, the other the way in which it opens.

The beginning of all true religion is, RECEIVING CHRIST JESUS. Not merely receiving his baptism or his name, but the Lord himself. The receiving of Christ is essential: where Christ is not found our religion is only a name.

Is it asked, "What is meant by receiving Christ?" It is to receive him as God's unspeakable GIFT—provided by the love of the Father, before the foundation of the world; and bestowed freely on us sinful men, without regard to our deserts. It is to receive him as our atoning sacrifice and justifying righteousness—cordially accepting him as *of God, made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*—coming to him, as the foundation laid by God—believing in him, as the appointed Saviour—and making him the ground of our hope of acceptance with God, to the exclusion of all other hopes. It is also, to receive him as our LORD, whose commands ALONE are to be obeyed: this may be the chief import of the words; for they may be translated, *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus to be your Lord, so walk ye in him:* where the reception is real, or the faith genuine, there will accompany it humility, love, devotedness: therefore to say that we receive Christ Jesus the Lord, is to say, that we receive him with the consciousness that we are sinners, perishing under the

wrath of God: as a dying man receives the last medicine that restores his life, or as a drowning man seizes the kind hand that saves him, with like joy and love we receive God the Saviour, and gratitude consecrates to him the rest of life.

This is the beginning of our new course toward heaven—the stretching of our wings toward the skies: and thrice happy are ye, Children of God, who have become such through Christ Jesus. It is our continuance in this way, that we are to consider from this text. *As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so* WALK *ye in him.*

To walk in Christ is:—

I. To CONTINUE TO APPLY HIS BLOOD for the cleansing of our consciences from guilt.

It is a common experience of the children of God, but especially of those who are beginning their Christian Life, that, when they fall into sin or feel their hearts averse to duty, a consciousness of guilt arises, which destroys their peace, and proves a grievous hindrance to them. The fear of being under the displeasure of God alienates their affections from him, and makes them unwilling to pray; and, therefore, religion no longer affords them pleasure: they become dissatisfied with its restraints; and thus, while

they are waiting for a better disposition and state of mind with which they may come with acceptance before God, unbelief is gaining ground, and imperceptibly causing them to depart farther and farther from God.

This is, because they lose sight of the Blood of Christ; or make not that use of it which it is their privilege to do: for Christ is the appointed means, not only of our obtaining reconciliation with God at first, but of securing his favour and walking with him in love. Through him *we have access by faith, into this grace wherein we stand* (Rom. v. 2). Such is the everlasting efficacy of his blood, that it was necessary that he should shed it but once: and *now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself* (Heb. ix. 26): but, by that one oblation, he obtained ETERNAL redemption for us; and by that one offering, has perfected FOR EVER them that are sanctified (Heb. ix. 12; x. 14). His blood is called a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, to signify, that as a fountain sends forth fresh streams for daily and hourly purification, so the blood of Christ is intended for the continual application of sinners to it.

The purpose of these constant applications to the Blood of Christ, is not indeed altogether the same as that of our first act of coming to him:

for that was to obtain the favour of God, and the repeal of the curse which had gone out against us; whereas these daily repeated acts of faith on his blood are more as memorials before God, and chiefly for the preservation of our own peace: thus our Lord said to Peter, *He, that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit* (John xiii. 10). It is also described as a way or road to God; by which we may learn, that it is not like the drawbridge which is taken up after you have passed over, but it remains fixed and open to all like the king's highway.

It is one of his attributes, *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever* (Heb. xiii. 8). Besides the perpetual value which the blood of Christ hath in the sight of God, he is himself pleading the merit of it at his Father's throne; and, on the ground of that, makes unceasing intercession for his people. We are, therefore, encouraged to *come boldly to the throne of grace*, seeing *he* EVER *liveth to make intercession for us;* and to *draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience* (Heb. x. 22).

Let us, then, be careful, Dear Brethren, when we fall into sin, never to remain at a distance from God, in a sullen and slavish despondency, as we are apt to do; for conscious guilt will

never remedy itself, but rather revive the ancient enmity against God. On the contrary, though our guilt be dark and threatening, and corruptions rage, let us, in spite of ourselves, flee, without a moment's delay, to the Lord Jesus Christ. What else can we do? *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life—Without me, ye can do nothing* (John vi. 68; xv. 5). Think not that ye will be rejected for all your iniquities: his death and intercession secure your pardon.

II. To walk in Christ, is TO LIVE IN DEPENDANCE ON HIS GRACE.

*It* hath PLEASED *the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell* (Col. i. 19); and it is also his pleasure, that the spiritual life of his children should be maintained, by receiving out of that fulness, grace for grace.

But we are slow to learn the practical use of these privileges, as is evident from the general unsteadiness of our walk. Tottering in our steps, and wandering in our course, are evident signs that we lean too little on the arm of another. The surprise and confusion which we are thrown into on the unexpected arrival of some trial, are proofs that we walk too much in dependance on our own wisdom, without considering ourselves as under the guidance

of another. If the Prophet's servant had seen the chariots of fire round about the mountain, he would not have been so terrified. And this is more evident still, from that solicitude and anxiety, those fears, suspicions, and surmises, about things to come, both temporal and spiritual, which form so large a part of our woes.

Now it is our duty and our privilege to feel, and to be in the habit of feeling, that we have no wisdom nor strength of our own; but are in such a state of weakness, that, if left to ourselves, we sink quickly to sin and hell. We should never suppose that we are alone, steering our own way across the ocean of life; but keep it always in mind, that the Lord is at the helm.

Nor should these thoughts consist of the mere general assent of the mind to the truth of God's assisting the righteous; but they should be the convictions of faith in that new Covenant of Grace, which provides the great Mediator to be to us in the stead of our own wisdom and strength.

To walk in Christ, is to remember always that we have thus, in the person of Christ, all the powers of the Godhead and all the sympathies of the Manhood interested about us and attached to us; that Christ being with us as God, it is the infinite strength of the Almighty

that defends—unerring wisdom that guides—and everlasting love that comforts us; that, as Man, we have in him one that is experimentally acquainted with our sorrows, trials, and temptations, and disposed to sympathize with us.

To walk in Christ is so to acknowledge him in these relations, as to place an unbounded confidence in him. If it be the pressure of present affliction, whether temporal or spiritual, that is our trial, we should assure ourselves that it is permitted or appointed by Him—regulated by Him in its duration and degree; and that it shall eventually forward our sanctification; and that, in the mean time, grace shall be given us to bear it patiently. If future difficulties foreseen, anxiety about our being faithful in such and such circumstances, be the cause of distress—and our creative fancy is ever inventing something or other to terrify us—all such disquieting fears are to be removed by leaving these difficulties with Christ; as the sheep looks to the shepherd for food, the wife to the husband for protection.

How happy the life thus spent in dependance on Jesus! As the little child enjoys itself without a thought in its mind about its maintenance, for it knows that this is its parent's care, so is it the believer's privilege to enjoy a perfect serenity by simply trusting to his Divine

Lord: *Be careful for nothing; but, in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus* (Phil. iv. 6, 7).

It is this life of faith that is spoken of in the Canticles, when the Church is described as going up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved; and this was the life of the holy Paul, and the secret cause of his eminence in holiness: *I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God* (Gal. ii. 20). And not only in general, but he mentions particular instances of his life of faith: at the time of his praying for the removal of the thorn in the flesh, when he was assured by the Lord Jesus that His grace was sufficient for him, he cordially receives the dispensation on these terms, and adds, *Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me* (2 Cor. xii. 9). When he stood before the lion at Rome, he saw by faith the Lord standing by him strengthening him.

The holy Apostle was well acquainted with this divine life; and it is a just occasion of grief and humiliation that we are such strangers

to it. Pride and carelessness are the principal reasons of our having, in general, no more than a faint glimmering of it. We know not our corruption—we forget our weakness—our lips confess that we are wretched, and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked; but our hearts are, notwithstanding, at the same time, as the hearts of those who say that they are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing. Hence we encounter temptations or other difficulties in our own strength; and if, by God's grace, we are conquerors, we feel self-complacency. But, in general, the tenour of our walk is careless: so that the hours and days are spent without exertion to keep our hearts in a spiritual frame; and therefore it is no wonder if the heart, left to take its own course, should seldom feel the necessity of seeking help from Christ. Hence self-knowledge and diligence must be exercised, in order to our understanding rightly that part of the life of faith, which consists in our dependance upon his grace.

III. To walk in Christ, is TO FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE. *Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son* (Rom. viii. 29).

Conformity to the example of Christ is,

indeed, only another word for spotless perfection; but it is confessedly a great help toward the attainment of perfection to be furnished, not only with written directions, but with a pattern by which to form ourselves: for if, at any time, doubts arise whether we are indeed following the prescribed rules, our conduct may be brought to the test by observing if it correspond to the pattern: for instance, if a person should be disposed to argue for public amusements, though they are not expressly forbidden, it is immediately decided by asking whether the Saviour would go to enjoy himself in such scenes of vanity and dissipation. A reference to the pattern has also this advantage attending it, that it enables us more easily to preserve a due proportion and harmony between the respective parts of the copy: for instance, persons are often actuated with what they suppose a laudable zeal, and know not their own spirit, till, on comparing themselves with their Lord, they discover that their zeal is not in proportion to their love and humility.

Thus Christ's holy life affords facilities for the general adjustment of our own; and every particular also of his offices, walk, and conversation, exemplifies every particular of our own.

Thus we may learn from Him that which is

the beginning of all sincere obedience, namely, a renunciation of our own will: as it is written, *We ought not to please ourselves*, but *every one to please his neighbour for his good to edification, for even Christ pleased not himself* (Rom. xv. 1—3).

The mortification of sin may also be learnt from his pattern, as St. Peter teaches: *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind* (1 Peter iv. 1): that is, do you also crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.

Humility is best learnt from considering Christ. *Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross* (Phil. ii. 3, 5—8).

Mutual Forbearance, and readiness to receive one another, notwithstanding our faults, is enjoined after the example of Christ. *Receive ye one another as Christ also received us, to the glory of God* (Rom. xv. 7). *Forbearing one another,*

*and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye* (Col. iii. 13).

The temper of Love, in general, is to be like him. *Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour* (Eph. v. 2). *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren* (1 John iii. 16). If we suffer unjustly from them who are without, we are taught to look to Christ, *who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously* (1 Peter ii. 22, 23).

IV. Lastly, to walk in Christ, is to walk IN FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM. We have *fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ* (1 John i. 3).

The former particulars of our duty mentioned were, that we are to apply to him as Sinners; depend upon him as Helpless; imitate him as his Followers; and, here we add, to hold communion with him as his Friends: for so he permits us to speak—*Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends* (John xv. 15). It is an exclu-

sive friendship, confined to his believing people: the world knows him not, nor he them: therefore he said to his disciples, *Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me* (John xiv. 19): he manifests himself to us as he does not unto the world. It is a familiar friendship: for, *Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me* (Rev. iii. 20).

For the preservation of this holy intimacy in its strength and purity on our parts, we must beware of inward pollution; for it is only *the pure in heart* that *shall see God.* It is not the sinful act only, but the sinful thought indulged, that will cause the Lord to withdraw his presence.

And, in general, the rules for the maintenance of human friendship are applicable here; such as avoiding of occasions of offence, and seeking to please. A friend will take it unkindly, if we do not speak in his defence when any thing is said to his disadvantage; nay, even if we do not speak in his praise, when any benefit would result to his cause. An estrangement of affection will ensue, if we do not visit him; and take pains too, if necessary, to find him: so except we SEEK the Lord in prayer, and persevere till we reach his presence, we shall be seldom blest with the light of his

countenance. Nothing mars our peace and engenders slavish fear so much, as carelessness and infrequency in prayer.

Having spoken thus much in explanation, let us now endeavour to APPLY the subject more particularly by addressing,

1. Those who are WALKING, NOT IN CHRIST, BUT SIN; and have not, it is to be presumed, received Christ Jesus the Lord: for he, that truly *nameth the name of Christ, departeth from iniquity.*

As ye have, therefore, NOT received Christ Jesus the Lord, our business with you is to beseech you to receive him. He has offered himself to you in times past, and you did not receive him; yet, though justly offended, he renews the offer. He offers to wash you from your sins in his blood—to clothe you with his righteousness—to deliver you from your sins—to purify your hearts—to give you peace with God and your own conscience; and, hereafter, an immortal crown. He asks not that you buy these blessings at the price of your works, or with any price; but to receive them as already purchased, and bestowed freely on the chief of sinners. Therefore *to-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts;* for your to-morrow may never come. Trifle not with God: make not light of his invitation: but lest you never

hear it agian, receive it while you hear it—before you die to hear it no more! Receive Christ without delay; and receive him as he offers himself—as a Saviour from SIN, as well as a Saviour from PUNISHMENT. Think not that you can receive his commands, and yet neglect his atonement; nor, on the other hand, that you can be delivered from punishment, and yet disobey him. Therefore be contented to part with every thing, that you may find him the complete Saviour; and be prepared to receive, along with him, contempt, persecution, and sorrow. Let the world go: give it up in every form that it assumes—whether *the lust of the flesh*, or *the lust of the eyes*, or *the pride of life*—forsake its vanities, its covetousness, its vain and ungodly company: do any thing, and lose every thing if necessary, if you may but receive the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Let us, who trust that we HAVE RECEIVED HIM AND ARE WALKING IN HIM, be reminded, by what we have heard, of the necessity of making this more a point of duty; or rather to make all duties a part of this, and to take shame to ourselves that we have neglected it so much in time past; and, in future, measure our growth in grace by our knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As a further encouragement, let us assure ourselves, that, if we

thus keep him in view, his attention to us will be reciprocal. He that in his love and pity redeemed us, will bear us and carry us all the way through the wilderness, as the kind shepherd carries the lambs in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young. He will bring us all on our way, in such a manner, that we shall finally reach the fold above. There, we shall have no more need to walk in Christ by faith and love, but by love only: for they that walk IN him here, shall walk WITH him hereafter; and He, that led them through the wilderness, will lead them to the joys in Heaven. *The Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of waters. The tabernacle of God* shall be *with men, and he will dwell with them. God himself shall be in the midst of them, and be their God.*

# SERMON IX.

## PAUL AND FELIX.

ACTS XXIV. 25.

*And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled; and answered, Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.*

THE occasion of St. Paul's being brought before Felix, was, the impossibility of obtaining justice for him from the Jews. It is remarkable, that, wherever he travelled, he always found his worst enemies among them; and the kind treatment, which he had often experienced from Heathen strangers, he would in vain expect from his countrymen. Whence arises this propensity in men, that, when there are many things in which they agree, they should hate for the things in which they differ, more than they do when they have nothing in common? Perhaps it is because, in the latter case, there is no collision; or, if there be, better temper

and consciousness of superiority (for all secretly claim superiority to all till there be a trial of strength) make us placid. The Jews would have heard with unconcern of the conversion of the Heathen Nations to Christianity; but when Paul, once a distinguished ornament of their religion, became opposed to them, they foresaw all that was to be dreaded from his talents, and hated because they feared.

On St. Paul's arrival at Jerusalem, where once he had been caressed, he soon found that which every man must expect to find from his former friends on becoming a Christian. St. Paul had not been long there before he was discovered; and immediately the whole city was in an uproar. They dragged him out of the temple, and intended to kill him, when Lysias, the Roman Officer commanding at Jerusalem, came with a large detachment and rescued him, bound him with two chains, and ordered him into the fort. When he arrived at the top of the steps leading to the Castle, St. Paul asked permission to address the people; which was granted: he then gave them the narrative of his marvellous conversion, and told them how the Lord himself had commanded him to go and preach to the Gentiles. They heard him patiently to this word; and then raised a clamour again, and threw dust in the air. Upon

this, the officer, who brought him in, unable to comprehend from St. Paul's speech what crime he was accused of, for there was no aim at exculpation, evidently suspected that the Apostle intended to divert the attention of the people to other subjects; for he was proceeding to examine him himself by torture, till informed that he was a Roman Citizen. The next day he convened the Council of the Jews, and sent Paul down to them; but, as soon as he began to speak, there was such an uproar, that Lysias was again obliged to send his troops to bring him away. The Jews, irritated probably that they had suffered him to escape twice, bound themselves, to the number of forty and more, under a great oath, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed him: informed of their intention, Lysias sent him away that night with a strong military escort to Cesarea, a town on the sea coast, the usual residence of the governor. Thus it came to pass, in the determination of God, that one Roman Chief after another heard the Gospel. The Governor at that time was Felix, who, having ordered the accusers to attend and heard what both sides had to say, declined deciding between them till he saw Lysias. Here the matter was dropped for some time. Paul continued a prisoner at Cesarea, and the cause was not brought

forward again for two years. It was while his affairs were in this state of uncertainty, that Paul and Felix had that meeting in private, the result of which, as described in the text, suggests so many solemn reflections.

Paul *reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come;* and *Felix trembled.* Such is the superiority, which poverty, with integrity, possesses over guilty grandeur. The judge trembles before his own prisoner!

St. Paul, amidst all the vicissitudes of his earthly lot, never lost sight of his high calling: nor was ever unprepared to speak on the subjects that lay next to his heart—the things of another world. Even at this period, when his fate seemed to hang in suspense, his mind was calm and his conduct unembarrassed. His spirit, absorbed in his work, and contemplating his high reward, rose superior to this world. Hence, instead of endeavouring to conciliate favour, he chose a theme, though he knew it would be far from pleasing. But the season was favourable, and might never return: he therefore gave him advice that might save his soul.

I. Knowing that we have to do with a holy and righteous God, upon whom depends our everlasting destiny; a Judge, who acknow-

ledges no distinction in men but that of righteousness and unrighteousness, he began to speak, and calmly to reason of that RIGHTEOUSNESS without which there is no salvation He would explain its nature—lay down a rule to measure it—argue for its necessity—and point out its end.

Righteousness, he would tell him, is a conformity to the will of God. How long has the light of Revelation shone upon the world; and yet, in the place of this obvious definition, others, almost heathenish, are continually substituted! The discharge of duty in the social and civil relations of life, is considered as the object of all religious systems; and, provided the end be attained, it is thought needless to raise objections about the way. This may be morality, but it is not religion. It comports very well with a system of Atheism; because if no future state is to be expected, we must be satisfied if we can but see happiness and good order in this: but it can never be held in consistency with the Revelation which we profess to admit: in that, to *love God with all our heart*, is declared to be the FIRST and GREAT commandment.

Duties to God form a distinct and separate part of the code of laws, given to us for the regulation of our conduct: so that we are no

longer left at liberty to suppose, that when we have satisfied one another, God is satisfied too. And the reason is evident enough. We are preparing for another state of existence, where the relations of parents and children, husband and wife, will be known no more. We shall be brought into a nearer relation to God himself; and, for that, some appropriate discipline is necessary here.

On these points Felix needed information.

St. Paul would, therefore, tell the Roman, that valour was not necessarily virtue, nor humility meanness; that a romantic friendship was often passion, not duty; and patriotism but a small part of Christian Love. He would warn him against measuring the virtue of an act by its apparent expediency: and, instead of admitting that a practice held in general esteem was estimable, to be cautious of admiring what men admire, since *many things are highly esteemed among men which are abomination in the sight of God;* but, in all things, to consider it his duty, henceforward, to ascertain the will of God and make that his rule. It is neglect of the Scriptures that makes men, calling themselves Christians, not only live Heathen lives, but defend their unsound practices by principles still more unsound; and make such gross mistakes in what they profess to know, as on

any other subject they would blush to be detected in.

Having told him what Morality was not, St. Paul might proceed to rectify his views of Religion; and would tell this benighted idolater, that religion was something more than spectacles and processions, sacrifices and festivities—truths, which, in another form, those need to be reminded of, who put the external Church for the real; and think that nothing has been left undone, when the Church has been attended, and the Sacrament has been received. He would let him know that God was a Spirit, who must be worshipped in spirit and in truth—in secret, as with the multitude; and that the preparation of the heart was noticed by him, rather than the construction of the prayer, or the repetition of it; that as we are here in this world in a state of preparation for another, where, if fit, we shall dwell with God, holy tempers and holy habits must be formed here by communion with God, in persevering prayer, and never-ceasing supplies of his Holy Spirit.

We cannot conceive that St. Paul, while speaking of righteousness, would omit intimating to Felix, as far as he was able to hear it, something of those deep truths respecting the righteousness of Christ, which it pleased God so fully to unfold to him, and on which he

expatiates so largely in his writings, and which he seems to have conceived more fully and lived and acted upon and rejoiced in more habitually than any other human creature. It was impossible, therefore, that Paul would let him remain ignorant of Christ: indeed the context expressly proves that Felix *heard him concerning the faith of Christ.* He would by no means let him suppose, that the life of devotion which he preached to him was to be the purchase of heaven; but would make him know that the Son of God, having in mercy come down to fulfil all righteousness as the surety for sinners and suffered the penalty due to their sins, they who believe become entitled to the reward of eternal life. New and strange would appear to Felix a system from which human merit was excluded. Alas! that it should remain incomprehensible to many among ourselves, who are zealous for morality against those doctrines, the ultimate effect of which is to promote morality!

II. If, however, any one be really so deluded as to think that the orthodoxy of his creed will atone for the irregularities of his life, let him observe, that the Apostle reasoned also of TEMPERANCE, or self-denial.

The opposition of our nature to the will of God, is the foundation of the duty of self-denial.

We are born in sin—we delight in sin: we must be torn from sin, or we shall never leave it. The leading agent in the work of self-denial, is the Spirit of God; and the man in whom he works will be temperate in all things—he will restrain his passion and his pride.

To be meek and lowly as the Lord—to be poor and patient in spirit—to forgive injuries—to abhor himself for his iniquities, is the duty of the highest as well as the lowest of men; a duty incumbent upon the soldier as well as others: and public opinion or practice cannot alter God's Word.

All love of human praise, or vain glorious self-complacency, on the possession of honours, or the distinctions of talents or opulence, birth or beauty, or any other quality natural or acquired, must be mortified and crushed, as utterly irreconcilable with that self-abhorrence which lies so deep in the nature of repentance and humility.

To check all impurity of heart is also a necessary part of temperance. Whatever therefore has a tendency to inflame the passions, in look, reading, or imagination, Christian purity requires us to avoid; much more, therefore, all that may pollute our bodies, which we are taught to consider as sacred, the temples of the Holy Ghost.

Worldly-mindedness is another species of intemperance; less suspected than bodily excess, but more destructive. It is the sin of riper years; a propensity, which time, instead of weakening as it does many other inclinations, has a tendency to strengthen. To them who are enslaved by this principle, death as it comes nearer appears more indistinct: more provision must be made for the way, as the way grows shorter: and, while they are anxious to hoard up for a future day, they cannot act upon the same principle and provide for a future state. As worldly-mindedness is the sin of the more advanced in life, to whom is committed the management of this world's affairs, because they possess most of the little wisdom that is in the world, to declaim against their system will appear to them puerile: yet as it is evident that sin is not necessary to conduct the affairs of sinful men (for how does God govern the world?) the fancied necessity of the system of the world exists only in their own excessive selfishness, or the obstinacy of their ignorance. But if it be so that falsehood, flattery, dissimulation, forming connections with the powerful to uphold our state or aggrandize our families, are of such indispensable necessity in maintaining our station, a good man will abandon his: he will lay down the instruments of iniquity and retire,

choosing rather to lose a good place than a good conscience.

St. Paul, while reasoning of Righteousness and Temperance, would sometimes lower the lofty tone which became the herald of God, and try to win where he had failed to intimidate. He would display the excellency of the Christian Character, whether considered in its connection with this world or its expectations in the next; and would bid him remark what various and valuable qualities are united in his person—what a constellation of glories compose his crown—how elevated his sentiments—how noble his conduct—how high his destiny—and how peaceful his end! He would contrast the pleasures of the world with those of religion: the world flattering, but false, and its friendship ruinous—religion faithful in its promises, though severe in its requisitions, awful in aspect, but in reality benign: the pleasure of sin unsatisfying, degrading, and at last disgusting; accompanied with guilt and followed by remorse—how different from the calm delights of a good conscience! how superior the satisfaction to be found in wisdom's ways! *Keep sound wisdom:* it *shall be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble: when thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt*

*lie down and thy sleep shall be sweet* (Prov. iii. 21—24).

III. At last, the sacred teacher, drawing to a close, would begin to enforce his admonitions with the dread sanctions of ETERNITY.

*As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment* (Heb. ix. 27), the time is approaching to every man, when he must leave the world, and go to give up his account to God.

It will then be inquired, not what was the state of things, their facilities or possibilities, or the standard of morality at the time he lived: for there is but one standard admitted, which is the Word of God—*the word that I have spoken* to you, *the same shall judge* you *in the last day* (John xii. 48); and according to that, the judgment will proceed.

It will be inquired, whether he kept the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus—whether he considered himself as a servant, accountable to God for the use which he made of the things committed to him; or as his own master, subject to no control but his own will. Every act of self-gratification, reference not being had to the will of God, all application of our means of doing good to selfish purposes, will be condemned as treachery and fraud.

Then, too, those acts of criminality, which had escaped the notice of men, or were beyond their cognizance—secret iniquity, and habitual neglects, and wilful ignorance; disregard of God's public ordinances; and omission of the secret duties of prayer, reading the Scripture, self-examination, and watchfulness, unconcern about the soul, and Him who alone can save it, the Lord Jesus Christ—will appear in their true colours. No degree of criminality was attached to these on earth: they were, in no respect, prejudicial to men's interest or honour: but, there, they will be considered as the preludes to final reprobation.

Then there is no reprieve, and no pardon: *the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God!* (Ps. ix. 17.) Though they had succeeded in rising above the fear of hell, they will not be above suffering it. God will then signally confound the wisdom of the wise; and will shew man what he ought to have been aware of, that, in this first stage of his existence, he is a mere child in wisdom, and in power a worm—a worm which God will crush, if it is not submissive.

But there, whatever lessons they learn, they learn too late; for their punishment is not chastisement, but an everlasting evidence of God's truth and holiness. There, as the Judge

himself hath told us, *their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched* (Mark ix. 44). They are bound in everlasting chains, *and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever* (Rev. xiv. 11).

*Felix trembled!* He was convinced in his conscience, that, if he died as he lived, he should perish. But did his alarm lead him to repentance? No.

Now what were the sins that maintained such a fatal ascendency over him, that though he knew that they would ruin him, he could not emancipate himself from their hold? The context informs us.

1. He lived in illicit intercourse with a woman, a native of the country. Drusilla, a Jewess, though called his wife, could not, properly speaking, be so, because it appears that she was the wife of another man. This woman was one weight about his neck. He knew that to be saved he must part with her, but to this he could not consent: like Herod, who, after hearing John preach, would do many other things, but not give up Herodias. Felix too would be most averse to make that sacrifice, which of all others was most necessary. Now, though Felix might have reflected, that all politic as well as good men would have deemed him unfit for the situation which he held, or for any other

place of trust, while he was in danger of being influenced by a native of the country, and though it was very easy for one of his rank to form a virtuous and honourable union with a Roman Lady, neither of these considerations had any weight with him. Sinners must make to themselves crooked ways, though it has been long known that they who walk in them shall not know peace: the very same happiness which they expect in sin, they might have as certainly, and often more readily, by adhering to duty.

2. The other predominant sin of Felix, was the love of money; a principle, of itself, sufficiently powerful to produce every species of evil. *He hoped that money would have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him* (Acts xxiv. 26). Thus it appears that he was a corrupt judge. Placed by his country on the seat of judgment, that he might judge justly and truly, this man took advantage of his distance from the Senate and the Emperor, to betray his trust, and for a bribe to turn aside the poor from his right. One so lost to every sense of probity and honour, so deaf to all the remonstrances of reason and conscience, as to descend to practices as infamous as they are immoral, must have been little

prepared for receiving the pure precepts of the Gospel. He retained, however, sufficient respect for the sacred character of his prisoner, to promise that he would hear him again the first opportunity. Possibly he might, at the time, have made resolutions to reform, when he should have lived a little longer in the enjoyment of his pleasures. But, however this be, it is evident that his religious impressions soon wore off: for, at the end of two years, we find him still engaged in his worldly schemes; and, that no means might be left untried for promoting his interest, endeavouring to ingratiate himself with the Jews, though Paul was to suffer by his complaisance to them. Felix was willing to have served Paul, but Paul could not requite him: Paul had no money and no friends. Felix therefore, in the true spirit of a man of this world, looked favourably on that side, where there were connections, and something to be gained. He made his court to the wicked Chief Priests, and left St. Paul in prison.

Thus ends the Scripture History of Felix: and here we leave him. Alas! the folly of sinners, with all their worldly wisdom! Is it not folly, for the sake of a perishing world, to destroy an immortal soul? for a momentary gratification of the senses to plunge into everlasting

fire? For let us be sure, that if there be indeed an eternal difference by the nature of things between righteousness and unrighteousness, God, in that judgment to come, of which we have been hearing, will also make a difference between the righteous and the wicked. If your worldliness will consist with this prospect, well: still let it be a sound, ever meeting you amidst the din of the world, that there is a *judgment to come! Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth....but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment* (Eccl. xi. 9). Forsake the God who made you, and despise the rock of salvation—still, to Him belongeth vengeance, and recompense. If he whet his glittering sword and his hand take hold on judgment, he will render vengeance to his enemies, and reward them that hate him: he will heap mischiefs upon them, and his arrows will be drunk with their blood: a fire will be kindled in his anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell; which shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. Oh, that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!—that they would consider that they have a latter end! that how many soever the days they give to pleasure,

how high soever they climb in power and grandeur, how happy soever they may be in their friends and possessions, there is an end to all, not far distant. When that is come, how comfortless must be the state of the soul that has nothing else to look to! This is one reason why God in his mercy calls us away from earth, and would loosen our attachment to all things here, that we may set our affections on things above.

As we may be permitted to hope that some among us tremble at the thought of a Future Judgment, we entreat them not to stifle their convictions, nor increase their danger by procrastination. Say not to your faithful monitor, your own conscience, *Go thy way for this time: when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee.* Hear conscience! What more convenient season than the present—when you have been excited, summoned, reasoned with! will you put it off to your death-bed? Alas! the soul has enough to do, then, to support the weight of a dying body; which, after being so long the abode, the instrument, the companion of the soul, becomes a burden to it which it cannot sustain. Besides, will you give the best of your time to Satan, and leave only the remnant to God?—God hath not dealt thus with you, who gave his Beloved Son for you.

Will you put off the necessary work till the next Lord's Day?—how do you know that this week's affairs will not dissipate your serious thoughts, and converse with the world weaken your resolutions? Trifle not with God: TO-DAY *if ye will hear his voice, while it is called* TO-DAY, *harden not your hearts.* He is free in the dispensations of his grace, and may withhold to-morrow what he grants to-day. Therefore, *whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest* (Eccl. ix. 10). Nay, even in this world procrastination may be an evil not to be remedied: for wisdom thus speaks—*Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you: then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early but they shall not find me* (Prov. i. 24—28). Though true penitents find mercy at the eleventh hour, many pray on their death-beds who are never heard: many cry for mercy, and never obtain it.

Now therefore, Men and Brethren, while you have life, and health, and strength; while your sun is not yet gone down, nor the grave yawning for you beneath; before time begin his ravages, and disease sap your vitals—ascend your watch-tower—contemplate the prospect—stretch your thought inward—and determine what the end shall be. You are, in one sense, the arbiters of your own destiny! God has opened the way to Himself, by the mediation of his Son, and by the offers of his Spirit. Through the Son, you may be forgiven—through the Spirit, sanctified. A feast is spread, to which you are invited; a river of life, of which you may drink; a crown of glory, which is your appointed reward! May God fix your hearts for glory, honour, and immortality, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

# SERMON X.

## INVITATION OF THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE.

REVELATION XXII. 17.

*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

THE words of a dying man have usually something in them which powerfully awakens the attention and fixes itself deeply in the memory: it is not the intrinsic excellence of the words, which causes the peculiar impression; but the circumstances of their being the LAST. We have also a sorrowful pleasure in remembering them: whether it is that they recal to the mind that solemnity of feeling with which we heard them, or whether it is that we are led by them into a train of meditations on the shortness of life and the things of this world all hastening to their end, it is certainly observable, that those words of a friend are remembered with most interest, which were spoken LAST.

Hence there appears a more than common tenderness, in the parting address of our Lord to his disciples, and his prayer in their presence. It is this, also, that adds a most affecting solemnity to all the Book of Revelation, and especially to the last Chapter of it: for the declaration of our Lord Jesus Christ which is contained in it is not only deeply important, as proceeding from the invisible world, and warning us of our approaching entrance into it; but still more so, from being the last which is left on record for the instruction of mankind. *Behold,* he says a few verses before the text, *I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

These words contain three things—a DECLARATION; an INJUNCTION; and an INVITATION.

I. A DECLARATION. Christ declares that he hears *the Spirit and the bride say, Come.*

For the explanation of these terms, *Spirit* and *Bride*, we may refer you to the ninth and tenth verses of the preceding Chapter; where it is said, *There came unto me one of the seven angels.... and talked with me, saying, Come hither: I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife: and he carried me away in the spirit.... and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem.* Under the emblem, therefore, of a Bride, as we see in the text, are represented all who are citizens of the Heavenly Jerusalem, whether they have entered in through the gates into the city, or are travelling along the narrow way which will lead them to it.

The near and intimate relation which subsists between a bride and her husband, is used by the Spirit of God to convey an idea of the union to and communion with Christ which believers enjoy—of the true love of Christ to his church, and of its dependence upon him. Once they were attached to the Law, expecting to be justified by their works: in this state, they brought forth no fruit unto God; but they *are become dead to the Law by the body of Christ, that* they *should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that* they *should bring forth fruit unto God* (Rom. vii. 4).

We should observe in these words, which are

taken from the Epistles, that the same allusion is made to a Bride in the Song of Solomon and in the Forty-fifth Psalm.

*The Spirit and the bride say, Come.*

By this we are to understand, either that the Holy Ghost calls on the Son of God to come to judgment; or else, that, by his influence in the hearts of his people, he awakens their inward powers to long for his Second Coming.

The latter interpretation is confirmed by the Eighth Chapter to the Romans, ver. 26, where it is said, *We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession in us*, or speaks for us; and *He, that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit:* and here he declares what the Spirit is saying in the hearts of his people. An instance of this silent eloquence, unnoticed by men but acknowledged by God, may be observed in the Fourteenth Chapter of Exodus, verse 15: *The Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me?* Moses had said nothing, but the voice of his heart was so loud and powerful, that it ascended to the distant heavens, and was heard at the throne of God. It is a language of the same sort that the Lord heareth from the bride; and the import of it, according to his declaration, is, that he would hasten his Second Coming.

1. Now as a bride desires the coming of the

bridegroom, because her former bonds of union to her natural relations are dissolved, or at least weakened, and her affections are now transferred to her husband, from similar motives the people of God desire the coming of the Lord. Once they were dear to the world, and the world to them: born with a natural attachment to it, they were confirmed in their love of, by increasing intimacy with it: the company of worldly people seemed indispensably necessary to their happiness; and the exclusion from their society as painful, as for one member of a family to be separated from its wonted intercourse with the rest. But, having now *tasted that the Lord is gracious*, their affections are transferred to Him: they have experienced the sweetness of diviner joys; and therefore the world can no more charm them as it once did: they survey its enjoyments with indifference; because those enjoyments are chiefly animal, and not suitable to that new and superior nature which they have received; and because they consider that if they were valuable in themselves, their duration is short: *for the fashion of this world passeth away:* IT IS passing away—it is receding from our eyes, while we look at it—it is disengaging itself from our hold, while we grasp it. They not only disrelish and disregard the world, but they FEAR

to enjoy it: they trust the Apostle for drawing up a faithful inventory of all that is in it—*all that is in the world* is *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;* for none of which they would endanger their souls. She is the Mystic Babylon that makes the nations of the earth drunk with the wine of her fornication, and therefore they tremble so much as to taste the intoxicating draught.

From scenes so transient and enjoyments so dangerous, they have turned, by the power of God, to seek their happiness in the Saviour: they prefer to live and dwell with Christ; because he is a better friend than the world, or any friend in it. They now say with the Apostle, *to me to live is Christ* (Phil. i. 21): all that which other men call life, their business and pleasures, their hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, the motives which excite and the maxims which direct them, are all centered in Christ: therefore, having nothing to engage them, *to die is gain.*

Hence the Saints long for the appearing of the Lord, because they love HIM and not the things of the world; as the bride desires the coming of the bridegroom, because her affections are transferred from all others to him.

2. The coming of the bridegroom is looked forward to as the beginning of that happiness

to the bride for which she has been preparing: so the appearing of the Lord Jesus is ardently expected by the saints, in proportion to their heavenly-mindedness, as the era of their deliverance from misery and the commencement of their perfect enjoyment.

In this life they are subject, not only to the common calamities incident to men, but to many, more grievous, which happen to them as Christians. They *enter into the kingdom through much tribulation.* They must bear with long-continued persecution, in patience possessing their souls. The fiery darts of Satan often pierce deeply into their spirits; and the deceitfulness of their hearts is often leading them to the verge of ruin. Moreover, the perverse opposition of the will to that which is good, or the deadness with which they prosecute that work to which they have no opposition, makes them often long for the termination of their warfare, of their danger, of their sin.

Their happiness will then be complete; they will have risen triumphant over the grave; the body purified from disease, and the soul from sin—their own will, and that of all that are saved, swallowed up in the divine will—the mysteries of Providence cleared up—and the wonders of grace displayed in full—no occasion left for sighing at the wickedness of others—

but men again endued with the temper of a creature, and God universally glorified: above all, they will be near Him whom their soul loveth, and sit down to *be for ever with the Lord.*

Is it a wonder, then, that the saints should long for the restitution of all things?—that they should be *looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?* (2 Pet. iii. 12). Nay, that they should be sometimes even saying, *Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?*

*The Spirit and the bride say, Come.* Such, you will see is the language of the Spirit and the bride, by collecting into one prayer a few of the scattered petitions of the Saints:—*Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!* (Ps. xiv. 7). *My soul panteth after thee, O God! When shall I come and appear before God?* (Ps. xlii. 1, 2). *And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest; lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest* (Ps. lv. 6—8). *Oh send out thy light and thy truth! let them lead me: let them bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy tabernacles* (Ps. xliii. 3). *As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satis-*

*fied when I awake with thy likeness* (Ps. xvii. 15). *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures: for with thee is the fountain of life* (Ps. xxxvi. 8, 9). *Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy* (Ps. xvi. 11).

Such is the language of the Saints, expressing an ardour, which to the world is unaccountable; and appears to most professing Christians so exalted, that they do not even attempt to attain to it.

II. Let us attend, therefore, in the next place, to the authoritative INJUNCTION of our Lord. *Let him that heareth say, Come.* Let him, to whom the Gospel is preached, unite with the Spirit and the Bride in their supplication, and say, *Come.*

But can men, in general, pray for the dissolution of the world when the fibres of their hearts are so closely wound round it? Can they desire *a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*, when they love the old earth so well, though there dwelleth unrighteousness? Can they serenely wait for the Judgment to be set, when their conscience even now anticipates their condemnation; or for the Books to be opened, where there is no hope

that their name is written in the Book of Life? Can the voice of Christ be desirable to them, when they know too well that he will only open his mouth to say unto them, *Depart from me?*

No: we must confess it to be impossible for men to pray for his advent, who are unprepared to receive him. Nevertheless the command is irrevocable. It must, therefore, admit of this interpretation—"Let him that heareth learn to desire my coming."

But how shall a polluted sinner be fit to be a bride for the Lamb? He possesses indeed a certain sort of righteousness, but he finds it is said concerning it, that *all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*—making him more loathsome than if he were naked; or, to speak plainly, the sinner is guilty and corrupted. But, for the removal of his guilt and his restoration to the favour of God, there is a righteousness provided for him—something for which God will accept him; pardoning his sins, and dealing with him as a righteous person, subject to no condemnation—and that is, the righteousness wrought out by Christ's perfect fulfilment of the Law in our stead.

This righteousness is often compared to a garment—to signify that it is no more a part of any thing in ourselves than a garment is any part of the body; but that, as a garment hides

all the defects of the body which it covers, so the righteousness of Christ veils all our past sins from the eye of God, in such a sense that we need fear no condemnation on account of them. Thus St. John saw a company of the Blessed *clothed in white linen;* which was explained to mean *the righteousness of the saints.* Again, it is said, *the righteousness of God without the law is manifested .... which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe* (Rom. iii. 21, 22): unto all as a gift, and upon all as a garment. And the ancient Prophet had such a clear understanding of the nature of this righteousness as covering our unrighteousness, that he rejoices in the view of it—*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord: my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness; as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels* (Is. lxi. 10).

The first step, then, toward the requisite preparation is, for us sinners to be invested with the robe of righteousness by faith, that is, by simply accepting Christ as *of God, made unto us wisdom and righteousness.* This is the wedding garment, necessary for those who shall be admitted to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The consequence of being without the wedding garment is evident from the parable: *When the King came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment! And he was speechless. Then said the King to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Mat. xxii. 11—13). The King did not require that they should come to his house furnished with a garment, for then he would not have sent out to gather them from the highways: but, surely, when the King had himself provided a wardrobe, what less could they do than make themselves fit for his presence? So they, who would not be ashamed before the Lord at his coming, must apply for his Spirit to cleanse them from all their impurity: for we may be sure that we shall never carry into heaven any thing that defileth.

These things are necessary to prepare us for the coming of the Lord: but that awful event cannot be the object of our desire, till we have received the full assurance of hope; the gift indeed of the Spirit, which is to be obtained by us in the way of diligence according to the exhortation of the Apostle—*We desire that every*

*one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end* (Heb. vi. 11). Let us also be permitted to remind our dear brethren in the Lord, that, without a spirit of watchfulness and prayer, by which we may grow in indifference to the world and in daily enjoyment of Christ's presence, we cannot with unreserved affection unite in the supplication of the bride.

This, then, is the injunction of the Lord—"*Let him that heareth say, Come.* Let him learn that he is *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,* and let him come unto me as of God made unto him *wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.* Let him *buy of me white raiment, that* he *may be clothed, and that the shame of* his *nakedness* may *not appear.* Let him ask of me the influences of my Spirit to renew him, and be the subject of that Spirit's never-ceasing operations. Let him not be contented to go on in uncertainty, whether heaven or hell await him; but let him plead with me for the witness of the Spirit, which is a privilege that I have promised, and which he therefore ought neither to neglect to ask for, nor hesitate to receive. And, finally, let him so live in the contemplation of my glory, and labour to maintain such inward enjoyment of my presence, as to be excited by

the foretaste to long for the consummation of it."

Such is the positive injunction of our Lord Jesus Christ, to every one that heareth—an injunction, with which we are in general so far from being able to comply, that we need every encouragement to induce us to attempt it.

III. He therefore adds, A gracious INVITATION: *Let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

By *the water of life* is signified a glorious immortality. As in the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Life was a sign or pledge of happiness to Adam, if he had continued in innocency; so *the water of life*, flowing through the paradise in heaven, is an emblem of that eternal glory which Christ, the Second Adam, has secured for all who believe. This seems to be the meaning of the figure, as used in the Revelation. In other parts of Scripture it may represent more directly those gracious influences of the Spirit, which prepare us for glory, and are a foretaste of it; as in the Seventh Chapter of St. John, ver. 39, the *living water* is thus interpreted—*this spake he of the Spirit.* In whichever sense it be taken, it is indifferent, for Grace and Glory mean the same in kind.

It is manifest that whatever can be conceived necessary to carry on and consummate the happiness of man, beginning with pardon and ending with glory, must be looked for amidst the streams of the water of life. Is he a sinner who must for ever remain a stranger to peace except pardon be offered?—then the Lord offers pardon, when he offers the water of life; for, without pardon, no promise, no assurance, can give him life. Is his heart polluted, and are his efforts to obtain deliverance feeble and unsuccessful?—then the waters of life shall flow, in purifying streams, through his heart; imparting, as they go, a vigour which the world, and the flesh, and the devil can never withstand. Is he a spirit immaterial, incapable of real enjoyment from earthly substances?—then the water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, is to be taken as the emblem of God the Spirit, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and carries life and enjoyment to our spirit, by giving us the knowledge of God and Christ: for *this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent* (John xvii. 3). Is man an immortal spirit?—then once more we have recourse to the water, and remark that it is the water of LIFE: the happiness of the soul which drinks it, shall know neither intermission nor

end; for new waters are incessantly poured forth from the fountain, and in one unbroken stream roll on for ever and ever.

But to whom is the Invitation made? To *him that is athirst—Let him that is athirst, come.* So also he spake by his Prophet—*Ho! every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters* (Is. lv. 1): a parched traveller, it might be supposed, would very well be satisfied at finding no condition required of him but that THIRST, which the waters are calculated to quench; yet, because we have an evil heart of unbelief, which would persuade us that we neither hunger nor thirst after righteousness, therefore it is added by our Lord, *Whosoever will, let him take the water of life:* surely there is no one, who is at all anxious for his salvation, who can assert that he is not WILLING to have the water of life; but if he be only WILLING, he may come and receive it: yea, whosoever he be that willeth, though his repentance bear no more proportion to his sins than one tear to the ocean, and though his faith be only as a grain of mustard seed—though his conscience be blackened with aggravated guilt, and his heart be foul with inveterate pollution—he may come. Lastly, when the trembling petitioner is drawing near the fountain, and about to ask the price at which the water is dispensed, he is answered "Take *the water of life freely.*

—Behold, it lies open to all! Do you take it *freely;* and *whosoever will*, let him take it freely: it was dearly purchased, but the price is paid: now, therefore, it cannot be bought by you; or if you will buy it, it must be *without money and without price—He that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat: yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price.*"

Let these things suffice for the eludication of the three several parts of the text.

We must add, in CONCLUSION, an observation or two on each of them.

1. On the first, which is Christ's DECLARATION of the desire of his bride for him to come to judgment, let us remember that he will hear her speedily.

Let us recollect, as often as the years come to their close, that we are one year nearer to that day; and that as surely as we have reached the end of one year, we shall also witness the end of time. *Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him* (Rev. i. 7). *The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him* (Matt. xxv. 31). *Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory* (Matt. xxiv. 30). *Behold, I come quickly....He,*

*which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly* (Rev. xxii. 7, 12, 20). *Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day* (2 Pet. iii. 8). *But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be: for as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not till the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be* (Matt. xxiv. 37—39). It will therefore be glorious—certain—sudden. Then *the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man, and every free-man,* will hide *themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come* (Rev. vi. 15—17). Let all who are unprepared believe these things and awake. You are swiftly, though silently, floating down the stream of time. The years are passing away, and you have as yet done nothing. If time waited for you, and death would delay his approach till you were prepared for him, you would have something

to justify your negligence; but neither time nor death will wait, till your half-formed purposes of amendment are completed. Think now, at the end of the year, to what little purpose you have lived hitherto, and bless God that he hath spared you so long. If it please him that you should enter upon another year, be prepared to begin it with new purposes and new views, that you may be able to say, at the beginning of such a year, *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies: I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments* (Ps. cxix. 59, 60).

2. From the consideration of the INJUNCTION of our Lord, that all, and especially his people, should not only be *looking for, but hasting to his coming*, let us reason with our unbelieving hearts, and rouse them to ardour, that we may really long for his appearance.

*Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* said Christ to Peter: so might he say, "Thou, that scarcely ever thinkest with delight on the great day when I shall call thee to my presence, art thou sure that thou lovest me?" Let us look into our hearts. Is it the fear of death, that throws a shade over our brightening prospects? Do the waters of Jordan, through which we must pass to the promised land, chill our ardour? *Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory*

*through our Lord Jesus Christ;* who hath himself risen, the pledge and pattern of the resurrection of Christians. Is there a doubt about our acceptance? then let us confirm our hopes by presenting to our minds the perfect freeness and the unbounded fulness of the promises, God's faithfulness in his word, and Christ's unchangeableness. Is a want of preparation urged by you as a reason for being unable to long for his coming? remember, that though indeed none are in themselves meet for the inheritance, yet in Christ your right to it is as certain now as it ever can be. Let us then be stirred up to be more alive to the certainty of these eternal realities—to leave the world behind us—to tread as on the verge of eternity; waiting for the happy moment that shall bring us into the presence of our Saviour and Lord.

3. Lastly, in reference to the INVITATION, let us once more turn to the careless, and ask, How long will ye harden your hearts? Will ye still be deaf alike to hear, whether God calls to you out of the whirlwind, or speaks to you in the softer breath of mercy? Has God thundered, and will you not take warning? or shall the Saviour invite, and you will not hearken? The approach to the *tree of life* was guarded by the sword of the flaming Cherubim; but to the *water of life* Christ himself stands ready

to conduct you—but, die without Him, and you are excluded for ever. What may be your determination, it is not for me to predict; but whether ye will hear or whether ye will forbear, say not now, say not at the Last Day, that you might not have received the water of life freely. I pray God to prepare your hearts by his grace, that, with the residue of Christ's people, you may be able to say, when he proclaims his coming, *Amen! even so, come Lord Jesus!*

# SERMON XI.

## THE NEW CREATURE.

2 CORINTH. v. 17.

*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

THERE are few subjects so imperfectly understood by Christians, as the doctrines of their own religion. Other branches of science are cultivated with care; and the want of a certain degree of acquaintance with them is supposed to argue a defect, either of education or of intellect: but ignorance of the Bible is attended with no disgrace.

Were we now in the predicament of our forefathers, who were debarred the free use of Scripture by the obstacles of a foreign language, such ignorance would excite less surprise; but, happily, the period of Romish Bigotry is past—the Sacred Volume is now accessible—and the small degree of literature necessary for understanding it has

descended to the lowest classes of society. It might, therefore, be reasonably expected of us all, that we should be not merely acquainted with the facts recorded in Scripture, but be able to discern the distinguishing features of that Way of Salvation which is pointed out in it.

The want of such discriminating knowledge of the peculiar nature of the Gospel, leaves us exposed—either to the attacks of unbelievers, who would challenge us to shew what greater evidence there is for believing this religion to be of God than another; or to the still greater danger of self-deceit. Hence it is of importance that we set before you, from the words of the text, first, the STATE OF A REAL CHRISTIAN; secondly, the EVIDENCE OF HIS BEING IN THAT STATE.

I. The STATE OF A REAL CHRISTIAN, or his situation in reference to God, is thus expressed by the Apostle—he is *in Christ*.

To be a Christian is not, to have been born in a Christian country and of Christian parents, to have received the sacramental ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and to live a moral and honest life, but it is to be *in Christ*; the strength and peculiarity of which expression suggests the idea of a state, very different in nature and importance from the mere

external possession of Christian privileges, or the performance of relative duties.

To illustrate the meaning of this expression, let us contrast it with our state as we are in Adam; partaking of his guilt, and inheriting his corruption. God, in his covenant engagements with Adam, treated with him as with the head and representative of mankind. Adam fell, and with him fell the whole human race; every individual, as he comes into the world, being now considered by God as involved in the first transgression. Hence the natural condition of men, whether their lives be more or less stained with actual wickedness, is a state of guilt, as well as depravity, at its very beginning. *We are by nature the children of wrath* (Eph. ii. 3). Such is our state in Adam. In this state all of us remain, who have not turned unto God from the world.

To be *in Christ* is to be related to him in the same sense, as we were said to be related to Adam; and the blessings flowing from the former relation correspond to the miseries of the latter: for, as those that are in Adam are considered by God as partakers of his guilt, independently of any disobedience of their own; so those that are in Christ are regarded by God as partaking of Christ's merit and possessed of a justifying righteousness in him, independently

of any previous obedience of their own: and, again, as those that are in Adam receive from him at their natural birth an entire depravity of nature; so those that are in Christ receive from him the renovation of their nature. Over those that are in Adam, the anger of an offended God is continually suspended; and will fall on them with overwhelming weight, if they die unchanged. On those that are in Christ, the blessings of a gracious God rest perpetually: his protecting providence, his Spirit influencing, his tenderest compassion and love, are secured to them for time and for eternity: he looks upon them as free from guilt, innocent in Christ's innocence, and righteous in Christ's righteousness; and will give them the reward of His merits when they die.

Those who do not attend to the Scripture account of this subject, are more accustomed to consider God as dealing immediately with ourselves than as in Adam. It will be of use, therefore, to contrast our state *in Christ* with what may be called the BEING IN OURSELVES.

In whatever degree we depend on our own works for recommending us to the divine favour, or imagine the ability to be holy is originally in ourselves, in that degree a Mediator becomes unnecessary for us. We transact our own affairs with God: we stand on our own

foundation; and God deals with us accordingly. He beholds us under that law of works which requires perfect obedience; and when once we fail of absolute perfection, passes sentence on us as condemned criminals. Alas! how sad and pitiable is the condition of natural men! chiefly pitiable because they know not their case: *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all* (James ii. 10). One act of dishonesty brands a man a thief; and one transgression of the divine law exposes to its condemning sentence, though men will not believe this.

The state of those who have fled from this danger to be found in Christ, is to be contrasted with the former, in this particular—that God no longer deals with them immediately in their own persons. The whole method of his proceedings toward them is changed: he regards them in a new light—adopts and adheres to a new system respecting them. He always thinks of them as in Christ—overlooks what they are in themselves: all that he gives to them, all that he receives from them, is through Christ; who is now the sole channel of grace, and the repository of spiritual blessings. Once he looked to them for merit—now he looks for it in Christ: once he remembered their sins—but he has now forgotten them: formerly every

blessing was suspended upon the performance of conditions—but now all is freely given or freely promised, and every promise not left conditional but made and secured in Christ. There is no longer any uncertainty hanging over those that are in Christ, whether at the end of life they shall be accepted or rejected: for, already, are they pardoned and justified—already, are they made the children of God by adoption—already, they are at peace, and have everlasting life. If Christ is worthy, then are they worthy. Did the Son of God fulfil the Law in their stead, and thus obtain righteousness?—then they also are perfectly righteous in the righteousness of Christ. Was he filled with the Spirit?—then shall they also receive the anointings of the Holy One. Did he rise from the grave, and ascend to his glory?—then they shall rise and dwell with him in heavenly places, and walk with him in white, and sit with him on his throne, and reign with him for ever and ever.

The peculiar term *in Christ* is borrowed from one or other of the following circumstances. Cities of refuge were appointed among the Jews with this design, that he who had been guilty of manslaughter might escape to one of them and be safe. These cities are emblems of the Saviour. Whoever, conscious

of his desert of eternal death, flees with brokenness of heart to him, is in Christ safe from the punishment of all his past iniquities. Again, as a sheep in a fold, so is a sinner in Christ (John x): it is not the manner of a good shepherd to cast off every untractable sheep, and send it astray in the wilderness; but to bear with it, and correct it, and feed it with the rest: so those that are in Christ are not cast off from God for their sins of infirmity, but made to cease from them—not given up to the power of Satan, but strengthened to conflict with him, and brought safely from this and every other danger to their everlasting inheritance in the skies. This, the attentive hearer will observe, is the Christian Doctrine of Justification by Faith in Christ.

Our text points out the consequences flowing from this doctrine, and completely obviates all the objections that are raised against it as unfriendly to morality. The Scriptures provide sufficient for sinners in Christ, through faith. Faith brings them into a state of friendship and favour with God, but does not then leave them to themselves: the Holy Spirit is then vouchsafed to be a Sanctifier and Comforter, and to prepare the justified soul for communion with the Holy God.

As it may possibly be an inquiry in your

minds whether you be in Christ, many of you having scarcely a reason for believing that you are, and yet unwilling to believe that you are not, we must attempt the determining of this critical question by considering,

II. What are the proper EVIDENCES of our having made the transition from ourselves to Christ. *If any man be in Christ*, then *he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

Here is a twofold evidence: there has been a Divine Operation upon him, and an Universal Change in him.

1. There is A DIVINE OPERATION UPON HIM: for he is *a new creature;* or, as it is in the Original, *a new creation.*

Creation is the work of God: He only can call into being that which had no previous existence, and bid that be which before was not. Religion in the heart is not the effect of our own reason acting by itself, or the consequence of moral persuasion; but it is a work wrought by the immediate supernatural power of God the Holy Ghost. We call it supernatural, because it is not one of those effects which God works upon all in the natural course of things, nor does it resemble God's natural gifts bestowed equally upon all; but it is peculiar to

those that are in Christ, and takes place on their union to him. *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you,* is the promise of God by Ezekiel: *and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh: and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments and do them* (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27): here the necessity of a new heart, and of the exertion of Divine power to produce it, are expressed in the plainest terms. In other passages, the same truth is conveyed with equal plainness: St. Paul, addressing the Ephesians, compares the power of God, in making us new creatures, to that whereby he raises the dead: *You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;* and, in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, it is likened to that act of creation which brought light out of the original darkness: *God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts.*

These passages furnish us with an incontrovertible truth—that there is a certain period in the life of every sincere Christian, at which he becomes the subject of an inward change, the effect of the power of God: not that it can be known by any momentary feeling, when the hand of God is upon us, as the inspired Prophets

could know; but the reality of such a change is certainly capable of being ascertained. It began perhaps in fear: it was attended with faint resolutions to amend; and then, by various steps, it ended in a cordial application to Christ, and an unreserved self-dedication to God. Yet all this, perhaps, took place by imperceptible degrees. When the morning succeeds the night, light and darkness are blended in continually different proportions, so that we cannot say when night is ended and the day begins.

It is scarcely necessary to be observed, that no change takes place in the original constitution of our minds, by our becoming new creatures: no new faculty is introduced into the soul, nor mental power superadded; but a new turn and direction is given to the passions which we already possess.

2. This will be more apparent, if we consider that UNIVERSAL CHANGE, which ensues in the heart and life. *If any man be in Christ, old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

The change in the conduct is, in most cases, remarkable. Observe how all the grosser habits of evil are cast off, and are succeeded by opposite virtues: if the man has been dishonest, he becomes upright; if a drunkard, he becomes temperate—the sensualist grows

chaste—the churl liberal—the proud man humble—the vain man modest—the backbiter charitable—and the malicious, envious and deceitful, kind, generous, and sincere.

There is a change of conduct toward God. Once the man presumed to pass the Sabbath as he pleased—to sanctify or profane it, to be absent from the house of prayer or to visit it, as most suited his convenience or inclination; but now he cautiously excludes both business and amusement from it, and dedicates the whole to holy exercises: he will not occasion others, even Heathens, to violate the Sabbath by giving them secular employments which are unnecessary, because God's commands are equally binding on them as on us; and, therefore, we are enjoined to give rest on that day to *the stranger that is within our gates* (Exod. xx. 10). Once he could live without secret prayer, or satisfy his conscience with the dull repetition of a form; but he now regards prayer as one of the most important employments of life. The Word of God heretofore lay neglected; but, henceforth, it is daily perused for the purposes of spiritual instruction.

His views of himself are become new. He will not now be heard speaking of the goodness of his heart, or justifying his defects, or presuming upon his comparative innocence for

recommending him to God; but, with deep self-abasement, acknowledging his desert of God's wrath, yet resting his steady hopes on the atonement of Jesus Christ.

With respect to the World and its pleasures, he has done with them: without retiring from his station in society or the duties attending it, he withdraws from that pursuit of riches and distinction in which others place their happiness; and he will never willingly countenance the dissipation of the world, by his own presence and example. On the earth it is his profession to be a stranger and pilgrim: his heart is in a better country: his affections are set on things above, and his treasure deposited there; and, when obliged to mix with the world, it is his purpose and prayer to be kept unspotted from it; to grow in holiness, looking for and hastening to the coming of the great day of God.

Let us observe his Relative Conduct. To the man who is in Christ a new creature, the government of his temper becomes an object of serious attention; for, according to his new views, all disorders of the temper must be considered as arising from pride, prejudice, or discontent, and therefore unbecoming a Christian: he therefore labours to be poor in spirit, meek, forgiving; patiently bearing with the

perverseness and obstinacy of those with whom he has to deal, and he will really love and pray for those who injure or speak evil of him. In conversation with others, the man who is in Christ a new creature will never think of defiling his lips with an indecent allusion, though veiled in ambiguity; because he knows it is equally detestable to God, and more dangerous to men than the open language of impurity—on the contrary, he hath so learned Christ, as to be pure in heart; and will, therefore, seldom fail to testify his abhorrence of any thing of this nature: he defends the ways of the righteous, and shews a decided preference for their company; yet, even with the world, he is not morose, or forbidding—he is serious, but not severe—pitying sinners, but not despising them—an opposer of all sin, but especially of his own. With respect to what he has in his own power, he does not conceive himself at liberty to use his time, fortune, or influence, as may suit his humour; but, bearing in mind that he is not a master but a steward of these things, he prepares for the strict account of his stewardship, which he must give at the end of life before the tribunal of God: his fortune, therefore, will not be spent in vanity, while there are any poor in the world who have a claim upon him by their misery, or any ignorant

whose spiritual benefit may be any way promoted by a proper application of pecuniary aid: nor will his time be devoted to excess of business, nor trifled away in unnecessary amusements; but he will employ all in the way that shall appear most to conduce to the glory of God and the benefit of mankind.

Such a conduct will undoubtedly subject him to the charge of singularity and preciseness; but, unconcerned at the opinions of men, he determines neither to be guided by the customs nor maxims of the world, but simply to follow the Word of God as an all-sufficient rule of life. In short, if any man be in Christ, he is altogether another man—*old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

Still there may appear to some to be nothing extraordinary in all this—nothing but what any man may accomplish by his own efforts.

We should consider, therefore, the Change of Heart or Inward Disposition, which preserves the alteration visible in the life. *A new heart will I give you,* said God, in a passage before referred to. To the same effect are St. Paul's words—*Put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind* (Eph. iv. 22, 23); and, again, *Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed, by the renewing of*

*your mind* (Rom. xii. 2). Here is a certain change spoken of, perfectly distinct from a reformation of life, however extensive that reformation may be—such a change of the heart, as presupposes its evil condition; and that, though we retain our natural faculties, the heart is in the most abject, corrupted, and forlorn condition, with all the passions affecting objects which are either false or dangerous. This is it, which renders a new creation necessary: there must be a new disposition of the heart: the bent of the will, the direction of the passions, the habitual principles, motives, and ends, must be different from what they were before: the taste and inclination must be different—the whole state and nature, in short, different.

Here is the work of God! man cannot reach the soul: but it is upon the soul that God's new creating influence is principally exerted; and the result forms a wide line of discrimination, between a divine work upon the soul and mere human efforts. The moving principle of the new-created soul, in all that it does in a moral point of view, has no longer a regard to character, or the advancement of temporal interests; nor even the fear of hell merely, and hope of heaven, though it is very powerfully influenced by these; for all these are no more

than the motives which naturally impel every man to action, and may exist where the heart is in its native unregenerate state: but its moving principle is Love—the love of God, which an unregenerated man never felt.

*The love of Christ constraineth us*, says St. Paul (2 Cor. v. 14). We serve God, not as slaves, but as children: our motive is the love which we bear to him, and our end his glory. We would not be as persons who are, so to speak, making a hard bargain, and who would know the precise quantity of virtue necessary for salvation; but we wish to serve him with the full flow of affection—to offer up to him hearts glowing with gratitude and love—and to have body, soul, and spirit unreservedly dedicated to his service.

There is also in the renewed heart a love to holiness, which was once the object of its dislike. This attachment to holiness is not, therefore, merely as it is necessary to salvation; but because it suits our renewed taste. It is, therefore, superior to all legal considerations. If, on a sudden, we should discover that there is no place of punishment or reward, our pursuit of holiness would not be given up; because, through the renovation of our minds, it is from choice and deliberate preference that we would be holy. We act, not from a calculation of loss

and gain resulting from the practice of holiness, but from a real liking to the thing itself.

In conformity to the same principle, we inquire not, how far we may indulge ourselves, nor determine to have every thing respecting right and wrong proved to a demonstration, that we may advance to the very limits of what is lawful; but we stand at a distance, and abstain as carefully from temptation as from sin itself: thus the hatred of sin implanted in our new nature discovers itself by leading us to avoid all that may lead to it.

All this forms a manifest distinction between regeneration and outward reformation, because it proves the disposition to be altered. Natural men may be conceived to do outwardly all that the purest saints can perform; but what man loves God and holiness from seeing them to be intrinsically amiable, or hates sin from feeling it to be essentially detestable, except the man in whose heart the Spirit has begun to draw the lineaments of the divine image?

One or two instances may be added, to illustrate the change that has taken place in the new-created heart.

Persons of strict and serious piety are often asked, why they abstain from most of the amusements to which the world are so attached; and they are called upon to shew the harm of

them. Without undertaking to prove the unlawfulness of these amusements, the Christian can always reply, *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but, when I became a man, I put away childish things* (1 Cor. xiii. 11): he once found his pleasure in such things, and was very unwilling to be deprived of them; but, since he has become a new creature, he has lost all taste and relish for them, and can now be satisfied only with divine and spiritual enjoyments.

Another circumstance worthy of observation, is the manner in which we treat the sins of others. There are sins, which, in the opinion of some, are less injurious to society than others; such as intoxication and impurity. A natural man, hearing of instances of these in others, not thinking or caring what view God has of these things, will either make a matter of mirth of them, or at least smile at what he hears of this nature, as if it rather amused than grieved him: thus, with an outward conduct, correct possibly and unblamable, he betrays the wickedness and unregeneration of his heart, by smiling at that at which God frowns. The really good man, besides possessing a quick sensibility for God's honour, is endued with a similarity of sentiment with the Deity; and can, therefore, take no

pleasure in that which offends God, and subjects his fellow-creatures to everlasting misery.

Examine, then, your ownselves, Brethren—prove your ownselves. Review the text, and ask, Are we new creatures? If the question appear strange to you—if the whole idea of the thing seem novel; or, as it is to some, ludicrous—you need not reply: you have manifestly not experienced the new creation. On what then do you ground your hopes of salvation? You say that you discharge your relative duties—doing as you would be done by—giving to all their due—that you are no extortioner, no adulterer, no slanderer—having failings, but not worse in general than others: but all this is of no consequence in the present inquiry: therefore the question recurs, Are we new creatures? What though you are kind parents, dutiful children, faithful friends, charitable neighbours, honourable in mercantile concerns, in short entirely correct in all social and relative duties; nay, that you wait upon God in public and private, and are regular at his house and table—of what use will it all be in the matter of your salvation, if there be not something more, if there be not a new creation of your hearts? *In Christ Jesus*, says St. Paul, *neither*

*circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a new creature* (Gal. vi. 15).

Neither is the necessity of this change to be found in the Epistles alone, of the obscurity of which some are pleased to complain who have no inclination to study them: our Saviour Christ himself set forth the same things with equal strictness, when he said to Nicodemus, *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:* and, *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again* (John iii. 3, 7).

And where is this change to be wrought on us except on this side the grave? Death cannot itself alter the habitual temper, nor will God exert his power on the soul which has lost the opportunities which were offered in this world! *Where the tree falleth, there it shall be* (Eccl. xi. 3). *He, that is unjust, let him be unjust still: he, which is filthy, let him be filthy still* (Rev. xxii. 11). If a man die, not born again, let him not expect to rise a new creature from the grave.

Then be persuaded of your danger, my Dear Brethren. Awake from delusion, and turn your thoughts inward. Deceive not yourselves, with supposing that morality is holiness, or that a reformation in the life is equivalent to a divine transformation of the heart. If you would fol-

low the saints of God, you must with them enter in at the strait gate and walk the narrow road, and experience with them the heart-renewing energies of the Holy Ghost. Let not the pleasures of the world tempt you to defer the consideration of this to another season: for it may be, that, on your death-bed, this passage shall recur; and you will then regret that you had not earlier yielded to the convictions which it must have produced.

If any, with reasonable alarm, are inquiring what is to be done, the answer is—*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;* for, since the new creation of the soul is the effect of our being in Christ, the first step in the way of salvation is to apply to him: and happy is it for us, that to warrant us to expect his grace no previous merit is necessary. The way is open—the gift is free—the invitation is couched in terms of unbounded fulness. Wait not till your hearts are better; but apply at once to the Saviour, and you shall be *created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that you should walk in them.* As the scion, engrafted on the stock, receives sap from it, and then brings forth fruit; so you, by your union with Christ, shall be holy in heart and life.

There are not wanting, in this assembly, some who have pondered this portion of the Word of

God—have been actually giving themselves to seek of God the new creation of their hearts—and have, in consequence, become *partakers of a divine nature.* Let them not be discouraged, if they find not such evident appearances of a change as they desire: for though the renovating energy extends universally through all the faculties, and the change is proportionate through this life; yet there will remain, to the end of life, much of the original corruption, which will indeed be a source of disquiet in proportion to its activity, but need not, while opposed, be an occasion of serious alarm, because the image of God thus drawn anew on the soul shall never again be defaced—this second image restored in Christ, being superior to that lost in Adam, in this respect; that, whereas the former exhibited the colours more bright and orient, this shall prove them more lasting and durable. In future days, a new scene will be unfolded, which will be more congenial to our renewed nature; for *He, that sitteth upon the throne, saith, Behold, I make all things new:* new employments—new thoughts—a new society—joys ever varying and ever new—shall engage the new created soul, and give new scope to its renovated powers, when this world and all that belongs to it shall have passed away.

# SERMON XII.

## NATURE AND MEANS OF CONVERSION.

ACTS, III. 26.

*God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*

THE demands of God upon a sinner for a holy life and a change of heart, can never be agreeable subjects of reflection to the majority of hearers. Preferring, as they do, those views of religion which are compatible with self-indulgence, the requisition of a stricter godliness, though enforced by the power of eternal sanctions, will be heard continually with increasing pain. Yet the case is too urgent to admit of our qualifying any of the commandments of God, or of withdrawing divine truth because it is offensive; for, whether we will hear or whether we will forbear, the Word of God remains unchangeably the same. *Except ye repent ye shall*

*all perish* (Luke xiii. 3). However, the Scriptures having described the happiness of conversion as well as the difficulty of it, we gladly follow where they lead; and will, therefore, do our endeavour to prove, that, according to the statement of the text, it is a blessing to be turned away every one of us from our iniquities.

But let us, first, offer some PREPARATORY REMARKS on this passage.

And, first, there can be no reasonable objection to the use of the word conversion, and to speaking of converted and unconverted persons, in reference to Baptized Christians: for we find that the word (that is, one literally synonymous to it, as any will know who are acquainted with the language from which the word Conversion is borrowed) is used in the text by St. Peter, while he is addressing, not the professors of a false religion, to whom the word is by some confined, but those whom in the previous verse he stiles, *children of the covenant which God made with* their *fathers*. The same privileged persons, in a former part of this Sermon also, he thus calls upon, *Repent ye and be converted* (v. 19). If Jews, in possession of the seal of the first Covenant of God, had need to be converted from their iniquities, no reason can be assigned why persons who have the seal of the Second Covenant may not have need to be con-

verted from theirs. We are not restricted to the use of a particular word, when the thing intended may be so variously expressed: but it is right that none should deceive themselves, by fancying the word unconverted does not belong to them, because they are Christians nominally.

For, secondly, this conversion from iniquities is not that reformation of life which human efforts can produce, the necessity of which is not disputed; but it is really a divine mysterious renovation of our inward nature: for the word expressing it is active in its signification—*he will turn away every one of you from his iniquities.* The agent is also brought into view, Christ, or God operating by a risen Saviour—*God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*

Let it be next observed from the text, that conversion has to do with more persons than the immoral; unless St. Peter was so uncharitable as to brand with the stigma of immorality the whole of his audience, many of whom were undoubtedly like St. Paul, who was, *touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless* (perhaps St. Paul was among them); or were like the Pharisee in the parable, who

was no adulterer, unjust, extortioner, but fasted twice in the week, and gave alms of all that he possessed: yet St. Peter calls on all to be converted.

Under the shelter of the Apostle's authority, then, we may be permitted to address the great mass of Christian Hearers, as persons who have need to be *turned away every one from his iniquities*—to suppose that every man, till changed by grace, has his iniquity, his favourite system of pleasure, between which and his heart a separation must be made before he can see life. It shall not be a course of dissipation or of gross sensuality, but a life the most common, consisting of business and amusement combined; adopted by him because it suits his interest or inclinations, and persisted in whether it accords with the will of God or not.

To shew that a conversion from such courses, apparently so harmless, to A LIFE OF STRICT HOLINESS AND SIMPLE OBEDIENCE IS A REAL BLESSING, is one part of our present object: afterward it will be made to appear, how this blessing is COMMUNICATED BY CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

I. A CONVERSION FROM SIN TO HOLINESS IS THE HAPPINESS OF MAN. He will *bless you*,

*in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.* While then we continue in iniquity, there is no happiness.

This is true, there are many sins in which there is no pleasure at all. It cannot be alleged, without great absurdity, that there is any pleasure annexed to the sin of profaneness, ridiculing religion, censuring God's laws, words, or works—no one having ever pretended, that these things had any tendency to promote his health or increase his estate: to wrong others in their reputation by slander, or to disturb their peace by contention, has no proper tendency to promote our own honour or peace, but the contrary.

Yet, if there be some sins in which there is pleasure, it must be said that there is no pleasure in nature peculiar to sin; that is, which may not be had in the way of duty: for what are commonly called unlawful pleasures are nothing else but pleasures, in themselves lawful and useful, but procured by means which God forbids, or carried beyond the limits which God assigns. It is this unlawfulness in OBTAINING, or excess in USING, that constitutes SIN; but this unlawfulness or excess has no pleasure peculiarly annexed to it.

We are not presently surprised by some new enjoyment, when we go beyond God's laws: on

the contrary, that very excess which constitutes sinfulness is the source of unhappiness: sinfulness and unhappiness begin together: for it is the immoderate love of temporal enjoyments, that gives birth, first, to impatience in desiring them, which impatience is pain; and, then, to that labour and toil in pursuing them which is so painful: it is the immoderate love of them, which makes the possession to be attended with such painful anxiety: immoderate love overrates expected pleasure; whence, the expectation being made greater than the enjoyment, disappointment ensues. Again, whatever pleasures decay, and at last disappear, will be a source of vexation in proportion to the love which we bear them; but losses and decay being unavoidable in the present state of things, excessive attachment to them must infallibly terminate in vexation.

Thus, by outstepping the strict commands of God, we turn natural and lawful enjoyments into an occasion of pain, by entangling ourselves in a train of perplexities, impatience, superfluous toil, anxiety, loathing, and grief.

It may be added, that a departure from God's restraints is not only in general thus fruitful in misery, but that each sinful temper has a way of punishing itself. Pride makes every affront a torment: envy hinders a man from relishing

his own enjoyments, till he sees his neighbour's misery: sensuality brings down the tone of general sentiment to a level with brutality, and degrades us to the misery of self-contempt: self-indulgence, in the way of indolence, stupifies the powers of body and mind, and superinduces insufferable fatigue. While men entertain such plagues and evils, how can they be happy? It is of little importance to your peace that all is right without, when all is so wrong within. In the midst of magnificent buildings, sumptuous feasts, gay clothing, and all the other fantastic pageantry that he can desire, the slave of sin is still a miserable creature.

Were there no pain attending these sinful pleasures, yet their insignificance is obviously unsuitable to the soul, which in nature is spiritual and immortal; for they are short and coarse. They are short, because life is short and uncertain; and the pleasures of life are still more uncertain than life itself: though we were ever so sure of life, that cannot secure us the pleasurable enjoyments of it; for they are liable to a thousand dangers, which all the precautions that human prudence can suggest, are not always capable of preventing: so that the pleasures of sin are what we are sure to part with at death, and not sure to retain till then. The sinful pleasures of life are coarse also,

being chiefly those of the bodily senses, which any creatures can enjoy who are endued with senses: now to limit the soul to the enjoyments of brutes cannot, it should be thought, be advancing it far toward its blissful elevation in the scale of being: if, on the other hand, our pleasures arise from the gratification of pride, vanity, love of grandeur, and such things, this only assimilates us to the fallen spirits, who to the love of pre-eminence owed their ruin.

Excessive attachment to the creature is folly; and therefore cannot, in the nature of things, be the way of happiness. There is no folly in valuing creatures, but in overvaluing them; but we, not satisfied with giving them their true worth, feign an imaginary one. If all our desires bore a true proportion to their objects, there would be no inequality; and, consequently, no sin: but we break that proportion, by supposing a kind of all-sufficiency in creatures, which is a most chimerical imagination and the great cause of all our mistakes; for, on this question, there is no occasion of demur, the thing being plain, that He only can give us happiness who gave us being.

We have not enlarged on the more obvious miseries of a sinful life: we have not looked at the worldly man in his sick chamber, nor observed his dejection and discontent, his unwil-

lingness to hear or read the Word of God, or to be told of death: nor have we noticed the shame, remorse, and sense of guilt that are the concomitants of iniquity; or the dissatisfaction constantly in the minds of those who will not live after the commandments of God; or the dreadful fears and confounding forethought of judgment and eternity, which will some times be so importunate, as to force their way through all the amusements and diversions that are made use of to keep them out.

The dying thoughts of the man of the world will be here recollected with advantage: for, after all that is said about unnecessary strictness, where was the man yet found when he came to die, who did not wish that he had been more strict, and that he had rather erred on the side of self-denial than of sin?

Let us next see that there is not only no trouble peculiar to the duties of a holy walk; but that really these duties, in their own nature, have no tendency to trouble at all. Faith and reliance on Christ, do not cause such shameful disappointments, as commonly come of reliance on the world and the flesh. To be heavenly-minded does not injure our health or peace, as worldly-mindedness does. Temperance does not lead to diseases, nor industry to poverty, nor humility to contention, nor honesty to

shame. Meekness and poverty of spirit do not make us pine as envy does.

If we consider the nature and design of holiness, it appears to be not merely a preparation for happiness, but an ingredient in it: for it is a progressive return to that state of delight enjoyed by Adam before his fall; and it is an imitation of the disposition and employments of angels, and of others who are already supremely happy in heaven.

Faith in Christ, the fundamental exercise of a Christian Mind, has for its object the gladdest tidings that can be conceived. Love of God contemplates infinite excellency, and lays hold on all-sufficiency. The gracious Love of our Neighbour is so delightful, that those pleasures of society which wicked men enjoy are founded on the resemblance of it. Humility, and disengagement of mind from the world, give such serenity and tranquillity to the spirit as are inestimable. To which may be added, that the well-grounded hope of eternal life, if duly impressed, is a greater present pleasure than any worldly enjoyment whatsoever.

It is to be considered, also, that, by the promises of the Covenant of Grace, God has engaged to give, not only future happiness, but present peace—pardon of sin—strength to perform duty—acceptance of it—communion with

himself—comfort under affliction—returns of prayer—and, finally, what comprises all other blessings, that he will make all things work together for our good, and let nothing separate us from his love.

Against our general assertion, Repentance may be objected, as being a very unhappy thing. It cannot be denied, that both sorrow for sin and mortifying of corruption have some trouble and uneasiness in them: but that pain is neither the native fruit of duty or obedience, because had mankind continued in their duty there would have been no occasion for repentance; nor is the trouble attending it peculiar to it, for impenitent sinners have inward agony arising from impenitence, and conscience causes them more uneasiness than the deepest humility can give a believer's penitence. Faithless remorse was far more painful to Judas, than godly sorrow was to Peter; as the event testified. There are some kinds of sorrow, which human nature takes pleasure in: and, surely, the noblest and most rational melancholy in the world, is melancholy for those unworthy actions by which we have lost the chief perfection of our nature, the image of God—by which we have made such unbecoming returns to his kindness, and forfeited his inestimable favour and friendship: such sorrow as this has a sub-

lime pleasure in it, since it is an exercise of love to God; and is also, if evangelical, joined with a hope in God's mercy through the merits of his Son. Again, self-denial or mortification of corruption is not peculiar to duty: a wicked man oftentimes cannot gratify one corruption without mortifying another; for sinful desires are full of contradictions and inconsistencies, and can seldom or never be all gratified together.

But the Word of God must give the authoritative declaration of the happiness of true godliness. That tells us that the ways of wisdom *are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace* (Prov. iii. 17)—that Christ's *yoke is easy, and* his *burden light* (Matt. xi. 29)—that *gladness is sown for the righteous* (Ps. xcvii. 11)—that *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace* (Gal. v. 22). The very command of God is, *Rejoice evermore* (1 Thess. v. 16)—the joy of faith is a *joy unspeakable and full of glory* (1 Pet. i. 8). The peace which God gives is perfect peace—*peace that passeth all understanding!* (Phil. iv. 7). Both the Prophets and Apostles employed the most beautiful images of nature to paint the greatness of these joys: as when they speak of the oil of joy—the garments of praise—the budding and blossoming of the rose—the time of the singing of birds—the joy of ban-

quets and marriage-feasts—the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds—the springing of the grass after rain: the lifeless part join in the triumphs of God's people—the mountains and hills break forth before them into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands—the skies drop down from above, and the earth brings forth righteousness; and many other bright images are there, whose scope is to shew that *godliness* hath the *promise of the life that now is*, as well as *of that which is to come* (1 Tim. iv. 8).

Then let not a false impression remain upon our minds. Let not Satan's devices be believed; who, to serve his own purposes, would veil the fair form of religion in a mantle so dark. Let us see that true holiness is nothing worse than sound sense—reason unobscured—true philosophy—and nature acting according to its genuine original constitution, and approaching to primeval purity; a state of order to which the universe shall be reduced at the restoration of all things.

II. If you will believe that Holiness and Happiness are one, but know not the way to attain either, we have now to say that no doubt or error need remain, because God has himself appointed the way. GOD HAVING RAISED UP

HIS SON JESUS, *sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*

He has instituted a way, who is a God of grace, wisdom, and power. Why then should we seek happiness in another way? Surely, if there be any method of happiness appointed by God, THAT must lead to the attainment of the proposed end—not only effectually, but most delightfully: for the plan of God having originated from the free suggestions of his own love, the same love would induce him to make the means as agreeable to us as the nature of the case would admit. His method, too, must have all its parts disposed in the best order for leading us to happiness: so that, though some of his arrangements may be to us apparently confused, and others unnecessary; yet reason must convince us, that seeming defects are to be ascribed to our own ignorance, while absolute perfection is to be predicted of the works of God. We may doubt, for instance, whether an instrument, apparently so inefficient as Faith in Christ, will lead us to holiness: but it is the means appointed by God, and he engages to make it effectual to lead us to purity and joy.

Why then, my Brethren, seek your happiness from the gratification of your carnal wishes—why from the world, or from Satan—*God having raised up his Son*, for the purpose of blessing

you? Jesus is sent to bless you—why strive to gather comfort from self-complacent contemplation of your own goodness? It is not the method of God, and will therefore be unavailing. He has *sent his Son to bless you, by turning away* your hearts *from iniquity.*

What this means, it surely behoves us to inquire. It will surely be our wisdom, as it is our duty, to set ourselves to study this method of grace, and endeavour to understand it.

The Resurrection of Christ was the consummation of that work of his which he undertook for sinners: for them, as their Surety, he obeyed the Law perfectly, which they could not do; and, for them, he suffered the punishment which was due to their sins. Now, as the liberation of one who is surety for another proves the debt to be paid and the creditor satisfied, so the deliverance of Jesus Christ from the prison of the grave is the evidence of God's having no further demands on a believing sinner for his past debts: henceforth, a blessing is communicated—a person is sent charged with blessings: henceforth, Christ, not by his power only, as a Divine Person, is sent to bless us, but as a Risen Saviour. It is in consequence of the completion of that work, by which he obtained merit for us, that he is qualified to bless us.

Sent, therefore, by the Father, behold, Christ

comes! The Prince of Peace!—the great Benefactor of Mankind!—the promised Deliverer comes to us at the present hour! He comes to bless us, not to lay upon us an iron yoke. His Gospel is not a system of restrictions to make us unhappy: he has nothing to gain by depriving us of earthly comforts: it will add nothing to his happiness to see us miserable. His design is to call us, not to misanthropic gloom, but godly sorrow — to deaden none of the energies of the mind, but to recover them from confusion—not to check the flow of joy, but to confine it to its proper channel—to restrain none of its legitimate operations, but to reduce them to order—not to debase the mind by superstitious fears or slavish anxieties, but to ennoble, elevate, and refine it.

But observe, he can do all these things only by *turning* us *away from* our *iniquities.* If we would be partakers of Christ's joys, and receive the peace which flows from the religion of Christ, we must submit to his discipline: a patient, who will obey in part only the prescription, and that part which happens to be most agreeable, will not reasonably expect to derive much benefit from it. It is necessary, then, that you should unreservedly resign yourselves into his hands, and consent to forego the dearest gratifications at his command.

This premised, let us say that He comes with ability to save all, of every name and every character.

He comes to the GAY and DISSIPATED; and sees, with pity, how from youth to age they pursue the wild career of vanity and folly—how, in the crowd of the world, they try to lose themselves, and to shun reflection on their latter end—how, in a round of visits, engaged in from mere idleness, or from a desire of preserving connections with the great, or from fear of singularity, they waste their time, that precious moment, which, when longest, is short enough to prepare for the eternal home. He inspects them more narrowly; and sees the envy, hatred, pride, and lust, which lurk beneath the polished exterior: he sees them, however, panting after happiness; and that, he offers them, in words like these—*How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning? and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you* (Prov. i. 22, 23).

Accept the proposal, Brethren—even all among us who are living in conformity to the world, forgetful of God. Be persuaded, at least, to try whether, by the powerful conversion which the Son of God can work in you,

and the subsequent life of serious piety to which he can lead you, there is not real pleasure to be found—not such pleasure as that of religion is generally conceived to be—not a dim gleam of comfort resembling the melancholy satisfaction of an invalid raised from sickness; but a lively joy, the vivid animation of rich delight, sometimes rising into transport. There is no faculty or passion of the mind, which may not be as ardently excited and called out to as high endeavour and generous exertion, by what it sees and enjoys of divine things, as by the impressions which it receives from what St. Paul calls, with a high contempt, the *beggarly elements* of this world (Gal. iv. 9): it should be supposed, indeed, far more so; as the flame is brighter, the more pure the air is in which it burns.

Religion, therefore, cramps none of the mental energies: on the contrary, the ease and celerity with which the renewed soul acts in the ways of God, evidences the machine to be returning to order. Indeed, what reason can possibly be assigned, why even the lively cheer of youth should not find exercise in activity for a Creator, and love toward a dying Saviour?—why a pure and peaceful mind should not be as pleasurable as a vain defiled heart?—a growing meetness for heaven, as productive of satisfac-

tion as rising into consequence and wealth?—and the favour of God, as gratifying as the smiles of a deceitful world?

With respect to the pleasures of the world, some are to be given up, and others may be retained; but let us remember, that we are not to choose for ourselves which we will resign, but to leave it entirely to him. We must withhold nothing from him. Our first business is, to dismiss every notion of our having a right to any pleasure. It is our's to stand in an expecting posture, ready to renounce the world instantly at his command. This belongs to us as creatures and sinners: as creatures, we are to have no will but God's—as sinners, we are to feel ourselves unworthy of any pleasure, in this life or the next. If it be his word to you to withdraw from the company of those who prove too plainly that they are of the world, you must leave them at once: *Come out from among them, and be separate* (2 Cor. vi. 17). If he require us to devote more time to prayer and the study of the Scriptures than is consistent with the success of our business or with our inclinations in other respects, yet let us make the decision on the side of self-denial: without frequently cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye, no advances are made toward the kingdom of heaven. After all the sacrifices which we may

be required to make—and many painful ones there will be—yet after all, what is it which he requires us to part with, but that which is the source of our misery? He wishes only to mortify and eradicate the poisoned part, before the whole frame sinks under the power of the venom—to awaken us from a lethargy, which would end in death—to pluck the viper from our bosom, which we are cherishing to our ruin.

Next he is sent to bless the SELF-RIGHTEOUS part of mankind. It is true that he came, *not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* But, possibly, we may not be as righteous in his sight as we are in our own: nay, he scarcely sees a case more dangerous, than that of a man wise in his own eyes; who fancies, that, after all that is said about faith and regeneration and other unintelligible mysteries, he has no reason to be afraid. Jesus Christ pities such self-deceiving persons, though they have no pity on themselves. If they cannot answer this question to their consciences, whether Christ has turned away their hearts from their iniquities—and ignorance of the meaning of this question is itself an alarming answer to it—they have yet to be converted: they must be turned from the iniquities of their pride, the iniquities of their obstinacy, the iniquities of their impenitence,

the iniquity of their impiety in choosing their own way to life instead of the humiliating path of the Gospel. Be turned from these, and you will be blessed indeed!—your cold duties will begin to glow with life—your obedience will be animated by a new principle—your hopes, resting on a more steady foundation than your own works, will be firm and strong. What though it be late in life with some of you, it is never too late to transfer one's dependence from sand to rock; and if, through indolence or fear of ridicule, it be not done, and you yet suppose that God will save you in your own way because you have long supposed it to be the right one, it is a mistake.

To the IMMORAL, PROFLIGATE, and ABANDONED, Christ is sent to bless them, *in turning* them *away from iniquity*. The subjects whom he takes in hand can be such as iniquity cleaves to: for all are supposed, in the text, to be turned away from it by him; and could not, therefore, be previously converted. Let this be an encouragement to you, Brethren, to approach the Saviour. Approach him in all the ways of his appointment—in secret prayer—in the ministry of his Word—in the sacrament of his body and blood. Whatever you may have been in past times, yet if you would at this moment resolve to yield yourselves to him and determine "to

lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways," you may "draw near;" and receive, not only a confirmation of your resolutions, but a pledge of your pardon. Let not conscience make you linger, nor fondly dream of fitness; for all the fitness which he requires is, that you feel your need of him. There is no case of guilt, or obduracy, or depravity, beyond the reach of his all-sufficiency: he both CAN turn the heart from the love of sin, and WILL do it. He is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel. Think how happy the change to you, to be delivered from the dominion of the fear of death and apprehensions of God's wrath!—to pass from all these to progressive holiness and peace!

Lastly, he is sent to bless WITH CONTINUED BLESSINGS, THOSE WHO HAVE BEGUN TO TURN FROM INIQUITY. Though we continue not in any deliberate habit of sin, yet, alas! there is much unrighteousness in our hearts; and guilt, with its concomitant sorrow, attends us still. For our deliverance from both, the Lord has commanded us to meet, from time to time, for the purpose of remembering, in a more lively manner, by the help of outward symbols, his dying love. Let us then, at this time, renew our application to him for pardon, and that he

may be pleased to bestow on us the spiritual comfort that comes from the right receiving of this Holy Sacrament: above all, praying that he would turn us away from unrighteousness, let us submit to every dispensation, however painful, which he sees necessary for this end. Let us not be surprised at affliction, the fruit of which is to take away sin: for if the issue of our trials be conversion from iniquities, troubles are only promoting his gracious purposes. Let us learn, then, to accept kindly the dispensations of our Saviour and Lord, whereby he expels sin and folly from our hearts. Let us understand and believe, that there is most happiness in that heart in which there is least sin; and that he is then blessing us most, when he is taking measures for delivering us from it: therefore let us be submissive and thankful. *The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever!*

# SERMON XIII.

## ST. PAUL'S DESCRIPTION AND SALUTATION OF TRUE CHRISTIANS.

1 CORINTHIANS, I. 1—3.

*Paul, called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's: Grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

HAD man retained the innocence in which God created him, the inhabitants of the world would have been all united in the bonds of charity: each would have found in his fellow-creature an affectionate friend. Men of different countries would have scarcely needed an introduction to one another's acquaintance; and the meeting of strangers with one another would have been an occasion of mutual delight.

But, alas! sin has changed the face of things! Such is the condition of mankind, that an unreserved communication with them is become impossible. Whatever romantic notions we may have entertained at the out-set of life, a very short acquaintance with the world is sufficient to convince us of the necessity of reserve: for, amidst the general duplicity and inordinate selfishness of men, we are liable, without being in some degree upon our guard, to become the dupes of treachery. So long, therefore, as men continue to act upon a principle of selfishness, mutual suspicion must ever check the flow of reciprocal affection.

But, if there be a people united by ties which are independent of worldly considerations, their communication with one another will be cordial. Such are the people who compose the Church of God. By having *one faith, one hope, one baptism, one God and Father of all*, but especially by having *one Lord* Jesus Christ (Eph. iv. 4—6), by whom and in whom they are all united, they can address one another as friends wherever they meet; and can, moreover, enjoy the communion of distant spirits, though they meet not at all.

Thus St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Colossians, speaks of the great conflict in prayer which he had for them, *and for as many as have*

*not seen my face in the flesh* (Col. ii. 1). With the same enlarged affection, he sends that salutation which the text contains—not to the Corinthians only, who were a church planted by his own hand; but to all those, who in any place called upon the Name of the Lord Jesus.

In discoursing from these words, we propose to consider,

I. The Apostle's DESCRIPTION OF TRUE CHRISTIANS; and, then, his Salutation of them.

The followers of Christ have the most honourable appellations assigned them in the Word of God. They are called the excellent of the earth—lights in the world—a chosen generation—a royal priesthood—a holy nation—a peculiar people. They are likened to a well-watered garden—to a fountain of waters—to a lily among thorns—to the palm-tree—and to the cedar in Lebanon. They are related to God as his habitation and temple—his flock—his jewels and treasure—his beloved—his friends and children—his heritage and portion.

But the light in which they are represented in this place exhibits them in their highest dignity, viz. as subjects of the appropriate operations of all the Persons of the Sacred Trinity They are CALLED, SAVED, SANCTIFIED—called

by the Father, saved in the Son, and sanctified by the Spirit.

1. They are CALLED OF GOD THE FATHER: for the name given to them in the text, *the Church of God*, signifies, according to the Original, a body of persons *called out* from the rest of mankind: and such are Christians, if they deserve the name. They are called to separate from an ungodly world, not only by the voice of God speaking in general terms by the Scriptures; but they are called by the voice of the Spirit in their hearts.

That some are thus wrought upon rather than others, and obey the call to come out from the world, is not to be ascribed to their superior merit, and their better inclination recommending them to God: the Scriptures declare that *it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy* (Rom. ix. 16); that *we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them* (Eph. ii. 10); and that *it is God which worketh in us, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure* (Phil. ii. 13). Whatever there is good, therefore, in his people, is God's own gift and work.

Moreover, *God hath from the beginning chosen* us *to salvation* (2 Thess. ii. 13); and that this was not because the merit of the objects was fore-

seen, is clear from Eph. chap. i. ver. 4, *He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love;* and from Rom. chap. viii. ver. 29, *Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.* Holiness is an effect, not a cause.

Almighty God acts according to the purpose of his own will, without thinking fit to render an account of it to his creatures: and though this act of his sovereignty is unquestionably consistent with his other attributes; yet, as that consistency is not revealed to us, we must rest satisfied with the general reflection, that the *Judge of all the earth* will *do right* (Gen. xviii. 25).

All that can be stated positively on this subject is, that, in the Covenant of Redemption, it is the prerogative of the Father to give whom he will to Christ: for thus said our Lord, *No man can come unto me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him* (John vi. 44); and, in his last prayer, recorded by St. John, he speaks of his people as given to him by the Father—*I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine* (John xvii. 9).

How high and awfully grand are the destinies of a holy soul! Known to the Ancient of

Days before all time and loved with an everlasting love, he is brought through every danger in this world to the enjoyment of eternal glory! How frequently should the Church of God be meditating on these things, and pondering the weight and excellency of them in their minds: for, to quote an Article of our Church, "To godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things, the godly consideration of our predestination and election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort*."

2. The Christian is further to be considered as SAVED IN THE SON; or, in the language of the text, *in Christ Jesus*.

This our Saviour lays down as evidence of our election: *Every man*, said he, *which hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me* (John vi. 45.) Every heaven-instructed Christian, convinced that he is ignorant, guilty, polluted, and enslaved, applies to Christ that he may *of God be made to him wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption* (1 Cor. i. 30). He feels himself authorised to do this, because *God hath set forth* his Son *to be a propitiation,*

* Seventeenth Article of the Church of England.

*through faith in his blood* (Rom. iii. 25): and he is encouraged to it by the gracious invitations of Christ himself—*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden* (Matt. xi. 28)—*Him, that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out* (John vi. 37)—and, *Whosoever will, let him* come; *without money and without price* (Rev. xxii. 17. Is. lv. 1). From this period, he begins to date a new era of his life; for, by renouncing all confidence in himself and desiring the righteousness which is of God by faith, he makes that critical transition, which carries him from death unto life: having come to God by Christ, he is regarded by God as in Christ: his former sins are remembered no more: God is satisfied with the atonement of Christ for them: a justifying righteousness is no more required of him, because Christ's righteousness is imputed to him, by faith; and the rewards of heaven, though merited only by Christ, are bestowed on the believer because he is in Christ.

How safe, how peaceable, how happy, how honourable to be thus in Christ! What are the feelings of those, who, after being in danger of shipwreck, have reached a hospitable shore? how does their late danger enhance their enjoyment of safety! Thus the man, who hath set his

foot on the Rock of Ages, may rejoice in his escape from danger, and in the assurance of his everlasting safety. The agitations of this tempestuous world and the tumults of a troubled conscience he has now escaped, and can smile at the angry billows breaking far beneath him. Now he lifts high his song of triumph—*The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer: my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower* (Ps. xviii. 2). Now he sends his challenge through the creation—*Who shall separate* me *from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us* (Rom. viii. 35, 37). Such is the safe and honourable situation of believers: and such the happiness resulting from their privileges; receiving a further addition from that sanctification of nature, which they receive from the influences of the Holy Ghost.

3. This is the third point which we were to consider: HOLINESS is that to which they are led, both by the love of the Father and by their union to the Son. This is the connection observable in the text. Called to what? not

only to be *saints* in Christ Jesus, but *sanctified in Christ Jesus.*

Concerning the necessity of holinesss, no humble Christian will pretend to raise doubts, since it is so expressly declared, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord* (Heb. xii. 14); though some, who affect to be advocates of grace, have fallen into the Antinomian heresy, *professing to know God, but in works denying him.* We suppose that none of you have fallen into this delusion; yet it is necessary to have it constantly inculcated upon our minds, that God, who hath called us to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, hath also called us to be holy, in order to be *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light* (Col. i. 12).

If he has appointed to us the end, he has also appointed to us the means of attaining that end. Is it said that he *hath saved us, not* at all *according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began?*—it is in the same verse asserted that he hath *saved us, and called us with a holy calling* (2 Tim. i. 9). Are we described as *partakers of the heavenly calling?*—immediately before is our corresponding title, *holy brethren* (Heb. iii. 1). Are there *given unto us exceeding great and precious promises?*—for

what purpose? *that by these* we *might be partakers of a divine nature,* and escape *the corruption that is in the world* (2 Pet. i. 4).

These passages illustrate that part of the text for which they were adduced; because they prove that there is an inseparable connection in God's purpose of bestowing holiness and salvation.

It must not, however, be imagined that holiness is a condition to be performed on our parts, for this were to make the Gospel a covenant of works. Holiness is the gift of God to us, not for a price paid by us to God; and it holds such a distinguished rank among the other benefits conferred on us, as members of Christ, that it is taken for the sum of evangelical blessings: as in that part of St. Peter's Sermon, *God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities* (Acts iii. 26).

The immediate agent employed in this blessed work is the Holy Ghost—*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience* (1 Pet. i. 2). Yet are his influences derived from such sources and regulated by such a standard, that we must still be said to be *sanctified in Christ Jesus:* for as the Holy Spirit is given to us primarily only for the worthiness of Christ, so on his account

the sacred gift is continued to us; for while we do so much to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, why does the divine influence still descend to us in a never-ceasing stream, but because the intercession of Christ is the source that supplies it? The manner also of the agency of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification is, to lead us continually to Christ—to bring his words to our remembrance—to exhibit the pattern of his life—to teach us to renounce all confidence in our own wisdom, and depend altogether on his grace—to recall to our minds our obligations to live unto him who died for us; our baptismal engagements to die with him, and to rise with him to newness of life; to have the world crucified to us, and ourselves to the world, by virtue of his Cross; and, in fine, as we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so to walk in him.

This completes the Apostle's Description of the Christian Character; and what need be added to shew its excellency and dignity? His name engraved in the Book of Life—his interests united inseparably with those of the Son of God—and his bosom the abode of that august inhabitant the Holy Ghost—the Man of God stands at an immeasurable distance from whatever is admirable on earth. If an individual possesses such excellency, how admirable the society composed of such members!

God rejoices over them with joy, and joys over them with singing. Well, therefore, may even an inspired Apostle delight to address his Salutation to them—*Paul, called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the Church which is at Corinth, Grace unto you, and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

II. This SALUTATION we were, in the second place, to consider.

The forms of salutation current among men have little meaning, either with those who give or those who receive them; yet is the neglect of them by no means unimportant: for, in a world so generally defective in principle, they are necessary to the maintenance of mutual civility; and, in many cases, an acknowledgment due to superiority of rank; and are, consequently, by no means to be discountenanced by Christians as bordering upon insincerity. In the mouth of Christians, they neither are nor need be insincere; for religion ennobles and sanctifies the common occurrences of life, infuses a new spirit into lifeless forms, and makes the daily routine of things an exercise of exalted virtue.

Salutations are expressive of a wish; and the wish, expressed in the customary forms of them, is for the health or prosperity of those to

whom they are given. As the usual form among the Greeks was that word which is translated Grace, and that among the Jews was Peace, both these are adopted by St. Paul; who elevates their signification to spiritual things, and expresses by them his desire for the promotion of the best interests of Christian People: *Grace be unto you, and Peace!* He wished not for the increase of their Wealth; for that is often a snare to the possessor, and increases the difficulty of entering the kingdom of heaven: he wished them not Honour; which has a tendency to promote that self-complacency which we ought to detest, and opposes that self-degradation which the Christian loves: not even for their Health and Long Life does he express a wish; because his mind was engaged with desires for their spiritual prosperity and immortal happiness. In short, he seems to have overlooked most of those things which appear desirable to the worldly, because, in general, they are not suitable to those who are called saints. On the contrary, with peculiar propriety, after his description of their character, he desires for them what was appropriate to that character: he wishes them whatever, as saints, they need—whatever, as saints, they desire.

1. He wishes for them GRACE.

Grace is that which they Need. Though

their name be saints—that is, holy; though they be a holy people, in comparison of the world around them and of their former selves; yet is their holiness incomplete. The divine change wrought in them extends over all the faculties, but is perfect in none of them: this is St. Paul's testimony of himself in Romans, ch. vii, which contains a map of his own heart. Sanctification is, therefore, a progressive work; and such is the difficulty attending the prosecution of it, that the natural powers of man are utterly insufficient to overcome them: *Without me*, says our Lord, *ye can do nothing* (John xv. 5). We need, therefore, Grace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ; and that only is it, which, secretly and invisibly infused into the heart, feeds the flame of piety, and enables us to maintain a walk in any degree consistent with our profession and principles. Our need of grace can, however, be known only by experience: who, for instance, but those who are assured of it from their own feelings, would believe, that, after we are sanctified and set apart from the world by God and made to differ from it in temper and pursuits, the mere reflection on the shortness of its duration, the intrinsic meanness of its pleasures, our speedy departure from it, and past experience of its insignificancy, are not sufficient to overcome every temptation to love

it? It appears, however, by fact, that the will is too stubborn to be bent by such considerations; and therefore the Scripture, though it does not overlook such natural reflections, leads us ultimately to Grace, as that which gives to other motives their persuasive power: it asks this question, *Who is he that overcometh the world?*—the philosopher, who can analyse its nature? no: he can despise it, and yet remain a slave to it—the moralist, who can descant on its vanity?—the poor man, who is debarred from enjoying it? no: *this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith* (1 John v. 4, 5): but faith is a heaven-descended principle, the gift of God, and not the native energy of the mind. If, then, to preserve the soul in its sanctity, Grace be necessary in those easy cases, where reason and experience co-operate in its favour, how shall the feeble spirit of man wrestle, unassisted, against the powerful legions of hell? He cannot, as the Scriptures declare, unless he *put on the whole armour of God*—gird truth upon his loins, take righteousness for his breastplate, peace for his sandals, salvation for his helmet, and the Word of God for his sword (Eph. vi. 11—17): but all these are weapons tempered in heaven, and provided for him out of the armoury of God: they are diversified forms of operations of grace, whereby

God empowers his servants to maintain their conflicts.

Thus it appears, how the Needfulness of grace shews the suitableness of the Apostle's wish.

The Desirableness of grace to the saints exhibits the propriety of his salutation, in another particular. He met their wishes, and told of a gratifying subject, when he spoke of their increase of grace: for, in consequence of that renovation of taste wrought in them from above, the children of God have a real affection to holiness, find in it the sweetest enjoyment, and press after it with unconquerable ardour: *One thing I do,* says St. Paul—*forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus* (Phil. iii. 13, 14). They love all the means of grace; all those employments which are constituted by God to be the channels of this desired influence: thus the Psalmist, speaking of public worship—*One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord* (Ps. xxvii. 4); and of the Scriptures he says—*Oh how I love thy Law! it is my meditation all the day* (Ps. cxix. 97): and if there be a train of thought which has at any time led their minds to a frame of devotion,

they endeavour to recal those reflections, that they may again enjoy those devotional feelings which they would constantly retain. If it were, therefore, proposed to the choice of a saint, as it was to Solomon, what he would request, all his desires would be concentrated in this, "that he might receive more grace." And not only is grace itself so desirable to him, but the manner in which he is to obtain it, according to the economy of redemption, is pleasing to him: it accords with his inclination, rather to receive occasional supplies from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, than to possess resources in himself: he is contented to have no resource of grace, but to be dependant on God through Christ.

2. Let us apply the same remarks to the other part of the Apostolic Salutation: PEACE, as well as Grace, is a proper subject of a Christian Wish; because it is both necessary and desirable.

Peace with God and with conscience is that blissful enjoyment which we receive by being in Christ: for, *being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ* (Rom. v. 1): and it is a peace to which every other man is a stranger; for *there is no peace saith my God, to the wicked* (Is. lvii. 21).

But, besides this peace, there is a certain

tranquillity and evenness of mind, which, however favourable to our sanctification, we find it exceedingly difficult to preserve amidst the confusion of this life. It is our aim and purpose to regard this world with the eye of a stranger—to pass on without seeking a rest below—to feel indifferent where others are interested—and, while we discharge our duties in life with diligence, to reflect continually that the world and all the things of it are passing away: but, alas! how seldom do we adhere to our purpose with steadiness—how often do we stop to look around us, where we ought to be pursuing our way—how often lend an ear to trifling conversation or trifling thoughts—how often are we carried away by the stream of general example, and suffer our worldly concerns to engross our minds; nay, are disposed to justify our anxiety! Thus the peace of our minds is disturbed, and the consequences are highly injurious to our spiritual interests: for when there is little heavenly-mindedness, self-recollection, and serenity, a Christian Temper is maintained with difficulty: we cannot, as we are commanded, be prepared for every good word and work; nor, indeed, be in any respect qualified *to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.*

That this peace, so necessary, so desirable, and

yet so difficult to be preserved, is the gift of God, and, therefore, properly the subject of a wish or prayer, is sufficiently evident from numerous passages of Scripture: *The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus* (Phil. iv. 7). *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee* (Is. xxvi. 3). *The Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means* (2 Thess. iii. 16).

Nothing more appearing necessary for the elucidation of the text, it will be useful to reconsider the two points which have been discussed: first, by applying to ourselves the Description given of the Christian; secondly, by adopting the Apostle's Salutation.

1. Inquire, Brethren, into the state of religion in your hearts; and if you would form a correct estimate, APPLY THE APOSTLE'S DESCRIPTION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER TO YOUR OWN. It is not to be expected that your's will correspond to it in every particular; but is there a resemblance?—are the same characteristic lineaments to be discerned in each?

If, to refer to the particulars before insisted on, we inquire concerning our election of the Father, let us ask if we have chosen Him for our portion: if so, it proves that we are chosen

by him; this being the Scripture mode of arguing, *We love him, because he first loved us* (1 John iv. 19). The Book of Life need not be opened to us, for our names are there.

In the next place, what are our views of the Son of God? It were easy to say that we depend on his merits: many Nominal Christians may say as much, understanding neither what they say nor whereof they affirm: they receive the Christian doctrine of atonement; partly because they have no reason to object to it; and partly because, in their views of it, it supplies their defects, or, in other words, countenances sin. We shall act more justly by inquiring whether that moment has yet occurred, when, sensible of our desert of God's wrath and damnation, we have actually fled for refuge to Christ: if so, happy are ye; *the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you*—if otherwise, no Christian Profession, no external correctness of conduct, will compensate for the want of a vital union to Christ.

Lastly, adverting to the remaining part of the Apostle's description, are we sanctified in Christ Jesus? For the solution of this question, let your spirit and conversation be inspected; for a test more unequivocal cannot be applied: a tree is known by its fruits; and *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentle-*

*ness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance* (Gal. v. 22, 23). You will observe, in this circle of Christian Virtues, something more than honesty, harmlessness, or any negative virtue. You will perceive that those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, will bear some resemblance at least to the divine original, in all the various excellencies which adorned His character. May we then see in you the image of our Lord Jesus Christ?—his devotion, self-denial, and profound humility? Is the increase of holiness your daily pursuit? Do you lament when your efforts for obtaining it are defeated? Then, however weak your faith or feeble your endeavours, you are led by the Spirit, and are undoubtedly the sons of God. Would that each of us would faithfully apply the Scripture Criterion to himself; and learn to adjust his character to the pattern laid down for a Christian in the Word of God! Then should we ADOPT THE APOSTOLIC SALUTATION without hesitation. Yet still shall it be lawful for us to wish Grace and Peace to every individual of the present assembly.

After a long absence from the House of God at home*, visiting only those shores where Christian Idolatry substitutes the crucifix for

* This was the first Sermon preached by the Author at the Mission Church, Calcutta, shortly after his arrival in India.

the doctrine of the cross, I desire, on this occasion, to acknowledge with gratitude the good providence of God, who hath permitted me to behold a congregation of Christians—a Christian Congregation of my countrymen in this distant land. Humbly do I implore the divine blessing on you all! O my Brethren, may you ever enjoy that peace which the religion that you profess is calculated to afford; and be the means of diffusing light and joy throughout this benighted region! Situated as you are, in the midst of the enemies of Christ, amidst idolaters of every description, you are justly regarded by the Christian World as occupying the most arduous and responsible situation in it. Nay, even the Saviour himself may be conceived to be more attentively observing your conduct, in which his honour is so deeply interested. By you the surrounding nations can take a nearer view of Christianity, and inspect its nature more narrowly; and the multitudes of all religions who are collected in this place, will be carrying into all parts of the world, what they see and hear in the followers of Christ. Oh, let not that Holy Name be blasphemed through any inconsistency of yours: let not pride or luxury be observable in the disciples of Him, who was *meek and lowly in heart*. Let them see in the lives of Chris-

tians what Christianity itself is; and, if they will not embrace the Gospel, let them be constrained to admire the professors of it. To this your country calls you. To descant on the public virtues of the British Inhabitants of India, would be foreign to our purpose: their established character needs not my feeble eulogy; but great indeed will be the honour which you will reflect on your country, if you prove by your lives, that Britain is not less pious than she is magnanimous and brave.

Permit me thus far to have applied the Apostle's Salutation to yourselves; and now, in conclusion, let us unite with St. Paul in wishing *grace and peace to all, that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.* Let every heart expand with divine benevolence. Let imagination transport us from shore to shore: let us think, how, with sacred ardour, they bend before the Universal Lord—their hearts acknowledge with ours a kindred affection—though their names be different, yet their Lord and ours is one—though they differ from us in nation, or rank, or colour, yet in this they resemble us, that they call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus—is he ours? he is theirs also. Then let us, with cordial and comprehensive charity, embrace them all! Let us heartily wish all the assemblies of

Zion grace and peace. And if, in this mental circuit, our thoughts veer to our Native Land, and fond memory recall those beloved scenes which imagination paints in colours perhaps more pleasing than true, let her assemblies of faithful Christians engage our more fervent prayers: thus shall our local attachments be elevated into an exercise of spiritual affection, and call down a rich effusion of blessings on ourselves and them.

Thus let us live in this heavenly temper toward all around; and, while we delight to find new objects of our love, let faithful hope realize that glorious day, when, in a larger sense, the prophecy of God by Zephaniah (chap. iii. ver. 9, 10) shall be fulfilled. *I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.*

# SERMON XIV.

## THE PREACHING OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

1 CORINTH. I. 23, 24.

*We preach Christ Crucified; unto the Jews a stumbling block; and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

If at any time God is pleased to make a revelation of his will to mankind, and to point out a way of salvation to them which is entirely new, it is evident that we can be in no respect judges before hand, what kind of revelation is to be expected, or what sort of truths are likely to be contained in it. We cannot so much as conjecture about these things with any appearance of probability; but must wait in patient expectation, till the revelation is actually made: because the nature and necessities of man may require a treatment which we are not at

all aware of. God's manner of governing the universe, of which we form but a very small part, may be utterly beyond the range and reach of our highest apprehension

Hence, when we examine a revelation purporting to be from God and inquire into the way of salvation pointed out in it, our minds must be made up to difficulties, and be contented to remain ignorant on many points which we hoped would have been revealed. When once we are satisfied with the external evidences of its truth, it is incumbent on us to inquire what is the revealed will of God; not what it ought to be, or might have been. It becomes us to ask for instruction with humility, and to receive it with reverence. If men will not conduct their inquiries in this spirit of diffidence, but, under the influence of premature opinions, will presume to dictate, instead of submitting to be taught, God does not accommodate himself to the prejudices of proud men, nor will he new-model his scheme to make it more agreeable to their views. As he first sent forth his Scriptures to mankind with a certain degree of evidence and no more, so he has left them: if men neglect them, on whatever plausible pretext, let them do it at their peril. Once he has sent forth his Word. With the majesty of God he declares,

*He, that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he, that believeth not, shall be damned* (Mark xvi. 16). It is, therefore, not to be expected, that God will enlighten the eyes of a captious scrutinizer of his truths; but will rather, in conformity to the principles of his wise and righteous government, leave them in darkness. If they look into the ark of God, like the Bethshemites, with unhallowed eyes and captious scrutiny, they will meet with a similar fate. God will not suffer any to trifle with his holy things. Their rashness will be death to them. Yet do unreasonable men persist in trying and examining the Gospel, by preconceived opinions—some judging of it according to the opinions imbibed in infancy; others approving of it no farther than it will countenance self-indulgence; and, according as the preached Gospel shall answer these conditions or not, determining to receive or reject it.

Of this latter description were the unbelievers of old: they required in the new religion certain things as indispensable; and when their expectations were disappointed they had done with it. Thus says St. Paul, in the preceding text, *The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom*, when they ought to have required nothing but the evidences of its truths; but *we preach Christ Crucified*—a subject which

they neither expected nor relished: therefore the one found it a stumbling-block, and the other foolishness.

In the words first read to you, there are three things to be considered. First, The SUBJECT of the Apostle's preaching; secondly, the DIFFERENT MODES OF ITS RECEPTION among men; thirdly, the TRUE LIGHT IN WHICH IT IS TO BE RECEIVED.

I. The SUBJECT of the Apostle's preaching, was *Christ Crucified:* which is, in brief, this proposition—That Jesus, who was crucified, is the Saviour of the World; or, more fully, the doctrine embraces all that respects the origin and scheme of salvation.

Man having subjected himself to the curse of God, no way of deliverance was found but by the divine interposition in his favour. The Father, in mere mercy, sent his Son into the world; and He undertook to save them, in the only way in which it was practicable, namely, by substituting himself in their stead: the Law of God required perfect obedience—he therefore answered the demands of the Law, and fulfilled it in their stead: their past sins required punishment—he therefore suffered it in his own person. With this work God declares himself satisfied, and accepts him as a propitiation for the sins of the world—that, for which he is

willing to be propitious to men, to pardon and take them into favour, to give them the spirit of holiness, and at last to exalt them to his glory.

Moreover, the way in which men can be interested in his death and receive the benefits flowing from it, is not by palliating their sins, or thinking themselves excusable, but by faith, and by faith only; casting themselves upon God as sinners, inexcusable and deserving of hell. If, renouncing all hope in themselves, they will thus come to Christ, they shall be justified freely by His grace—their hearts delivered from their attachment to sin—and they brought, without fail, to everlasting happiness.

*We preach Christ*, says St. Paul. This is not, indeed, to be invariably dwelling on the way of salvation by him; for men would by habit cease to have their attention engaged, and thus the end of preaching would be defeated: but it is to make it the main subject of our discourses—it is to be ever seeking to lead sinners to Christ.

To accomplish this end, various means may appear necessary. The minds of men may require certain preparation, for want of which the Gospel would be unintelligible.

The Heathen Auditors at Athens needed St. Paul to explain to them the unity and spirituality of God and his providence, together

with the certainty of a future state of rewards and punishments. And probably, in addressing the Jews, he endeavoured to convince them of their condemnation by their own law: he would point to their own sacrifices; and hence argue the necessity of some better sacrifice to take away sin. He would always give so much previous instruction, as the circumstances of the case seemed to require. As a wise master-builder, who designs to raise an edifice on a particular spot, surveys the ground, removes other buildings with which it is encumbered, and clears away as many obstructions as possible, that then he may lay a good foundation; so the Minister of the Gospel will be gradually seeking to edify the souls of men on Christ the true foundation, and yet make use of all the variety of methods which the topics of religion or the feelings of men will supply.

But though the Way of Salvation by Christ need not be constantly the preacher's theme, yet occasionally, and from time to time, men must be called to the single consideration of Christ Crucified. This is the sun that warms and enlightens the system of revealed truth: in the direct beamings of this sun, we must sometimes be placed, as well as have the genial light of it diffused around us.

Whenever we profess to confine ourselves to

this doctrine formally and exclusively, we then preach Christ Crucified; by representing him to mankind as the only Saviour, and the all-sufficient Saviour.

As the ONLY Saviour, we teach, that it is not permitted men to choose their own religion, or to cast up a high-way for themselves whereby to arrive at heaven, or to work out a righteousness of their own to recommend them; but that Christ alone is *the way, and the truth, and the life* (John xvi. 6)—that *other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ* (1 Cor. iii. 11)—that *there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,* but only the name of Jesus Christ (Acts iv. 12).

We proclaim him also the ALL-SUFFICIENT Saviour. In his offers of salvation, we declare that he requires no previous qualification; but, equally regardless of the antecedent morality or immorality of the subjects, he commands them to receive, and not to purchase—offers salvation freely to those who see themselves perishing, and promises to give all the holiness of heart which is necessary to fit them for heaven; and, then, that he is able to save to the utmost—fully qualified to begin, carry on, and complete the happiness and holiness of every believer.

These doctrines relating to Christ were uniformly insisted on by St. Paul and all the first preachers of the Gospel. Thus we read that *Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them* (Acts viii. 5); and when he was explaining the Scriptures to the Eunuch he *preached unto him Jesus* (Acts viii. 35). Notwithstanding the opposition which they had to encounter in doing it, the other Apostles *daily in the temple, and in every house, ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ* (Acts v. 42). St. Paul, on his conversion, *straightway preached Christ in the synagogues* (Acts ix. 20): and he determined to KNOW nothing, but *Jesus Christ, and him crucified* (1 Cor. ii. 2); nor to GLORY in any thing, but *the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Gal. vi. 14). There were some who preached Christ *of contention, not sincerely*; yet, says the Apostle, *whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice* (Phil. i. 16, 18): he never repented of having laid too great stress on this doctrine; for we hear him reminding the Ephesians at the time he was taking leave of them, that he had testified to them *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ* (Acts xx. 21).

In all after-ages, even to the present moment, the men who are chosen of God to be his wit-

nesses on earth, treading in the steps of the Apostles of old, have persisted in proclaiming the glories of their Lord. They take their place at a distance, as being servants, from a wish to remain unnoticed, that the single undivided attention of mankind may be fixed on the Master whom they serve. They preach not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. They are equally cautious about leading their hearers into error, by confounding the grace of God and the law of works, or by setting forth such principles of morality as the Heathen Sages might have taught; and give themselves up to the study of those divine mysteries which are known only by Revelation, that from them they may learn how to build up your souls on that foundation, which will stand the test of the Judgment Day.

Moreover, when they preach Christ Crucified, as they find it revealed, they are not concerned about making the doctrine appear more reasonable, so as to approve it to the learned, nor to state it so as to leave no room for objections; but as the Scriptures have left it, so they take it up. They do not gild over the Cross, or invest it with gaudy trappings, or allure men to it by deceitful panegyrics; but they take their stand at the foot of the blood-stained tree, and proclaim, in those words

which were written on the Cross—*Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews!* Thus the Apostles preached.

II. What RECEPTION this preaching met with in the world comes next under our consideration.

1. To the JEWS, it was A STUMBLING BLOCK.

The Jews had been accustomed to displays of supernatural glory. The promulgation of the Law at Mount Sinai was accompanied with all that splendid train of circumstances, which most powerfully strikes the outward senses. Hence the Jews, when they heard of the pretensions of our Lord, sought of him a sign from heaven, saying, *Master, we would see a sign from thee—a sign from heaven* (Matt. xii. 38.; xvi. 1). So those who came to hear St. Paul preach in the synagogues, expected he would ground his doctrines on a fact of such extraordinary glory, that the very description of it should delight and astonish them: but when they found that a man put to death by their countrymen was the foundation of this new religion, which was to supersede the whole system of the Jewish Ritual, they rejected it without hesitation. Thus the Person of Christ was *a stumbling-block to the Jews*, because deficient in external glory.

Equally offensive to them was the Doctrine

of the Gospel, because it was directly subversive of all their self-righteous confidence. They were by the Apostles told that God was no respecter of persons—that, before Him, their mouths must be stopped—that they were as guilty as the rest of men; and must be saved, if they were saved at all, not because they were the children of Abraham, or were strict in ceremonial observances and in works of morality, but only by faith in that person whom they had put to death. They found, moreover, that the Gospel is proposed equally to the moral and immoral—making no difference between them, but reducing them to a level; offering to Scribes and Pharisees salvation on the same terms as to Publicans and Sinners. Every part of such a statement was calculated to provoke their indignation. To renounce their own righteousness, and thus to be brought on a level with the accursed Gentiles, was what they never would hear of without rage. National and personal pride, prejudices imbibed in infancy and inveterate by time, all revolted against such humiliating doctrines. They stumbled, according to the prophecy of Isaiah and the predictions of Simeon: *He* was *for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence* (Is. viii. 14): he was *set for the fall of many in Israel* (Luke ii. 34). Though he visited them as the day-spring from on high—though

he rose as the morning-star, and shone as the sun in his strength, to guide their feet and shine on their path to heaven—they took offence at him. In consequence, the Gospel remained more than darkness to them: it became as *a stumbling-block* in their way, to which when they came they stumbled, and fell over it headlong into eternal perdition.

2. The Gospel met with no better reception among the GREEKS, who rejected it from causes which correspond to those which influenced the Jews. As the Jews sought after a *sign*, so the Greeks sought after *wisdom;* and as the Jews were proud with self-righteousness, so the Greeks were filled with conceit of their learning. They sought after wisdom.

Every branch of human learning was, at this time, in the highest state of cultivation; but the favourite study was that of the science of Morality: to that they directed particularly their attention, in order to discover some method of checking the progress of profligacy: they inquired into the difference of virtue and vice, as to the happiness of man: they formed systems of morality according to their various views, defended them by learned arguments, and were zealous of making proselytes to their sentiments. Hence, on the appearance of the Preachers of the Gospel, the Philosophers expected from men

setting out to be the instructors of the world, profound learning—a laboured investigation of truth and morals—refined arguments and ingenious deductions—something which might entertain cultivated minds, and lay the foundation for new improvements in theoretic wisdom. These things they sought, but they found them not. They heard the Sermons of St. Paul; but there was nought, in the matter or manner of them, that satisfied their literary thirst: they received no increase to their ideas, by his doctrines; nor did they find any exercise of their powers of reasoning, by his manner of stating them. On the contrary, the simple preaching of *Christ Crucified*, with the expectation of reforming mankind by it, appeared to these philosophers highly foolish and absurd; insomuch that they openly expressed their contempt of the Apostles, and treated the doctrines of Jesus and the resurrection with ridicule (Acts xvii. 18).

But besides the foolishness of the doctrine in their views of it, the pride and conceit of their hearts interposed another obstacle to their receiving it. The Gospel was neither preached by learned men; neither did it require learning or education to comprehend it. Besides, no homage was paid to their own superior abilities, but they were addressed by the Apostle,

with the same plainness as the illiterate vulgar. This treatment was too humiliating for the wise men to brook: they would not condescend to sit at the feet of fishermen, along with those whom they despised. Had the preachers been willing to pay them deference and allow them to be in need of no further instruction, they would have been better pleased; but the Apostle commanded them to unlearn all their errors, to lay by their proud prejudices, to become fools, that they might be wise; and warned them, that, unless they were born again, unless they were converted and became as little children, they would certainly, with the most low and ignorant, lie down in everlasting burnings. Such a system as this, which made no difference between the wise and unwise, was vehemently opposed by all the feelings of their proud hearts.

3. In the midst of this crowd of unbelievers, there was found a poor and despised people, BOTH OF JEWS AND GREEKS, TO WHOM THE GOSPEL CAME IN POWER AND THE HOLY GHOST. *For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God;* that is, after God had in his wisdom suffered men to make the experiment for several ages, whether human wisdom could bring men to the knowledge of God, and let them see by facts that it was impossible, then by the foolishness of preaching he saved

them that believe: to them, *Christ Crucified* was *the Power of God*, and *the Wisdom of God*—

III. And that, as we are in the last place to shew you, is the TRUE LIGHT IN WHICH IT IS TO BE VIEWED.

1. It is the POWER of God.

Power is estimated by the effects which it produces: one power is greater than another, if it produce greater effects than another, or the same effects by less means.

Now to wave all other considerations that display the Power of God as it operates in the Gospel, the single fact of a sinner's conversion by the doctrine of the cross is sufficient to establish this point.

For observe the state and condition of an obstinate sinner. He has given the reigns to appetite, and has been long running the career of wickedness: he goes on, deaf to the admonitions and intreaties of friends, and the warnings of conscience; and, regardless of consequences, is scarcely restrained, by the terrors of an ignominious death, from perpetrating the blackest crimes: the joys of heaven have no power to attract his desires, nor can the threatenings of eternal punishment deter him from sin: he continues his course of self-indulgence; and becomes headstrong—intractable—out-

rageous: all human means having failed to reclaim him, he is generally given up as irrecoverably vicious. In the course of a short time, the very same person may be seen walking soberly, righteously, and godly; not partially reformed, but following universal holiness: holding communion with that God whose very name he hated, delighting in that society which once he despised, he lives the ornament of human nature, and dies with a hope full of immortality. What was it, we ask, that changed him? did the angel Gabriel lead him in a vision to the empyreal heaven, and overpower his corruptions by a torrent of divine glory? or was a spirit of darkness sent to conduct him to the confines of hell, that the nearer sight of the livid flame might startle his soul, and force him from his sins? No! these arguments, or others as strong, had been tried in vain: legal hopes never yet made the heart yield: No! the man, whose change we are accounting for, once heard that *faithful saying, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*—that the Son of God himself had died for the chief of sinners—that now pardon for the past was offered freely, and grace for the future stored up for the penitent: this strikes his attention and wins his heart, and a gleam of returning hope begins to steal through his breast: "If this great salvation be

for any," he will argue, "then why not for me? If Christ was crucified for me, then I may hope, that, for his sake, God will surely receive me. I will believe that *the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin:*" he ventures to apply for pardon; and, almost to his own surprise, his conscience enjoys peace within! the inward change begins by the renovating influences of the Holy Ghost; and the same person, who was before in the image of Satan, is made by his inward purity to resemble the Holy One!

An instance like this, is not a solitary trophy of the victories of the preached Gospel. When first the sword of the Spirit was grasped by a mortal hand, three thousand fell before it; and wherever in the world it is wielded by the servants of God, it marks its way by the conquest of all whom it strikes. Many of you can add your testimony, from the course of your own experience: you can say, it is the doctrine of Christ crucified that encouraged you at first to set out in the ways of religion—it is that wherein the power of God is daily manifested to your souls.

Then, if I ask any of you for a specimen of divine power, lead me not to the heights above, or the depths beneath—bid me not admire that word, which stays the proud waves of the sea and forbids it to pass the appointed bounds—shew me not the strength of that arm, which

took up the vast orbs of heaven, and hurled them along the fields of space; but let us ascend Mount Calvary together, and direct our eyes to Him that is hanging on the cross—for there alone is to be seen, according to God's own declaration, *what is the exceeding greatness of his power*—there, God has exhibited, not a partial exertion of his power, but as it is energetically expressed here, Christ is *the Power of God.* In Christ, all the diversified operations of divine power are concentrated and brought to a point.

2. Christ is also the WISDOM of God: for, in Christ, God hath attained the two great ends of all that he does (if they may be called two), namely, his own glory and our happiness.

Wisdom, you will observe, appears to most advantage in cases of difficulty. When she steers her way clear through many a perplexing difficulty, and at last arrives at her destined end without any untoward or disorderly accident, then she appears in her proper character and native excellence.

To perceive the wisdom of God in Christ, we ought to bear in mind the difficulty of attaining the end proposed; which was the glory of God and our happiness. If men were an upright race, all would be easy: those who continued perfect would ascend to heaven, and

those who sinned would descend to hell. But how man, after being a sinner, could be made happy here and hereafter, was a problem of no small difficulty. If God had pardoned sinners by an act of sovereign power, his truth would have been impeached; for he would then give life to whom he had before denounced death: neither could justice have been exercised: and thus, an appearance of weakness would attach to the character of God. If, on the contrary, he had offered no pardon, he would have been just and true indeed: his mercy and love would have had no scope for exercise. But, in Christ Jesus, *mercy and truth*, formerly irreconcilable, *are met together* in a friendly manner—*righteousness and peace*, God's righteousness and our peace, *have kissed each other* (Ps. lxxxv. 10).

By his dying on the cross in the stead of sinners, there was a way opened for the exercise of all God's attributes. For as Christ undertook to be accountable to God for all our sins, God in punishing Christ punished our sin: thus he displayed his justice. Moreover, since that person who became our Surety was not one of ourselves or an angel, but his own Son, who was dear to him, here his mercy and love are discovered.

And not only do the divine attributes find

scope for exercise in Christ's death without interfering, but they throw light on one another. Men would perhaps have regarded their pardon as no great exertion of mercy in God or ground of gratitude in themselves, did they not see the severity of God's justice as sustained by an innocent person, which would otherwise have fallen on themselves; neither would they believe how inviolable was his truth, if he had not shewn that he would rather part with his own Son, than sully his truth to accomplish the salvation of sinners.

And from this we are led to observe, that each attribute is, in the highest degree, set off and glorified by its opposite. They are not forcibly reconciled together, nor do they merely harmonize; but they all put honour one upon another. One does not rise by the depression of the other; but they all rise together. The more we see of the glory of one attribute, the more we shall see of every other. While God's hand lies heavy on his Son, justice assumes its dignity; but mercy likewise rejoices: as the strokes of his wrath are redoubled, justice wears a look of more awful grandeur; but mercy smiles with increased sweetness: and when all the vials of wrath are poured forth on Christ and justice triumphs in complete

majesty, mercy rises with equal progress and beams forth from her countenance unutterable glory.

The more we contemplate the mystery of Redemption, the more we shall see it a masterpiece of Divine Wisdom; and the more sincerely shall we join the exclamation of St. Paul, *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!* (Rom. xi. 33). Human intellect could not conceive a plan more wondrous in wisdom to be possible: nay, it is a subject of astonishment to angelic minds; for God has designed *that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be* made *known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.* How justly, therefore, does the Apostle add, *Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory* (1 Cor. ii. 6, 7).

In CONCLUSION, we notice the Misery of those who resist the call of the Gospel.

There is, in every congregation, a large proportion of Jews and Greeks.

There are persons who resemble the Jews in self-righteousness; who, after hearing the doc-

trines of grace insisted on for years, yet see no occasion at all for changing the ground of their hopes. They seek righteousness *not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumble at that stumbling-stone* (Rom. ix. 32); or, perhaps after going a little way in the profession of the Gospel, they take offence at the rigour of the practice which we require, as if the Gospel did not enjoin it. *This is a hard saying*, they complain: *who can hear it?* (John vi.60)—and thus resemble those who first made the complaint, who *went back and walked no more with him* (v. 66).

Others come to carp and to criticise. While heretics who deny the Lord that bought them, open infidels, professed atheists, grossly wicked men, are considered as intitled to candour, liberality, and respect, they are pleased to make serious professors of the Gospel exclusively objects of contempt, and set down their discourses on the mysteries of faith as idle and senseless jargon. Alas! how miserably dark and perverse must they be who think thus of that Gospel, which unites all the power and wisdom of God in it. After God has arranged all the parts of his plan, so as to make it the best which in his wisdom could be devised for the restoration of man, how pitiable their stupidity and ignorance to whom it is foolishness!

And, let us add, how miserable will be their end! because they not only are condemned already and the wrath of God abideth on them, but they incur tenfold danger: they not only remain without a remedy to their maladies, but have the guilt of rejecting it when offered to them. This is their danger, that there is always a stumbling-block in the way: the further they go, the nearer are they to their fall. They are always exposed to sudden, unexpected destruction. They cannot foresee, one moment, whether they shall stand or fall the next; and when they do fall, they fall at once without warning. Their feet shall slide in due time. Just shame is it to the sons of men, that he whose delight it was to do them good, and who so loved them as to shed his blood for them, should have so many in the world to despise and reject his offers; but thus is the Ancient Scripture fulfilled—*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God* (1 Cor. ii. 14).

Tremble at your state, all ye, that, from self-righteousness, or pride, or unwillingness to follow him in the regeneration, disregard Christ! Nothing keeps you one moment from perdition, but the mere sovereign pleasure of God. Yet, suppose not that we take pleasure in contradicting your natural sentiments on religion, or in giving pain

by forcing offensive truths upon your attention—no! as the ministers of joy and peace, we rise up at the command of God, to preach Christ Crucified to you all. He died for his bitterest enemies: therefore though ye have been Jews or Greeks, self-righteous, ignorant, or profane—though ye have presumed to call his truths in question, treated the Bible with contempt, or even chosen to prefer an Idol to the Saviour—yet return, at length, before you die, and God is willing to forgive you.

How happy is the condition of those who obey the call of the Gospel! Their hope being placed on that way of salvation which is the *power* and *wisdom* of God, on what a broad, firm basis doth it rest! Heaven and earth may pass away, though much of the power and wisdom of God was employed in erecting that fabric; but the power and wisdom themselves of God, must be cut off from his immutable essence, and pass away, before one tittle of your hope can fail. Then rejoice, ye Children of Wisdom, by whom she is justified. Happy are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; and the things which God hath hidden from the wise and prudent, he hath revealed unto you. Ye were righteous in your own esteem; but ye *count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of*

*Christ Jesus our Lord.* Then be not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, *which is the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth;* but continue to display its efficacy by the holiness of your lives, and live rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

# SERMON XV.

## THE CHURCH A SPIRITUAL BUILDING.

EPHES. II. 19—22.

*Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

"HAPPY are the men who can look back on their former lives, and, after comparing their past experience with the present, find substantial reasons for believing that they are passed from death unto Life." Lifted up though they be, as the needy from the dunghill, and set among princes, they are not unwilling to be reminded of their mean original. On the contrary, forasmuch as the remembrance of

it magnifies the riches of God's grace and endears the dying love of the Saviour, they find, on considering the blessed change, that their meditation of it may be sweet. When, therefore, the Apostle reminds his Ephesian Converts of their former misery, he is not to be considered as aiming so much to produce humiliation, as to awaken affection: he gives a clear and express representation of what Christ had done for them: they had been, as all the Gentiles were, without Christ, without God, without hope; but now they were made nigh by the blood of Christ. *Now therefore*, he adds, *ye*, Gentiles, *are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.*

In these words, the society of true-believers is compared to a great building. To preserve this idea of the text distinct in our minds, it will be necessary to remember that the Church of God is sometimes compared to the human body, the head of which is Christ—sometimes, to a family over which he presides—sometimes, to a city—at other times, to Mount Zion; but, here, to a single building, which rests on Jesus Christ as its foundation.

In conformity to the Apostle's idea, we must call your attention, first, to the MATERIALS; secondly, to the FOUNDATION; and, thirdly, to the BUILDING itself.

I. The MATERIALS.

Every stone, which is taken to construct a building, however it may have been polished by the hand of the workmen, was once rough and unsightly, and buried in the bowels of the earth: and ere yet we were called out to take our place in the building of God, that was our condition. This is the resemblance found for us by Isaiah—*Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged* (chap. li. 1)—there we once lay. As the rude stone not only belongs to the quarry, but forms a part of it; so we were not only connected with the world, but ourselves constituted the world: so that when the saints were warned against the company and conversation of the world, we were some of the persons intended—we were those enemies of God whose acquaintance would contaminate them.

We could not have extricated ourselves from the world, any more than a stone can start from its parent rock without the application of external force: we were so closely rivetted, as to baffle the strength of all but of Him who is

*mighty to save.* He only was able to force us and the world asunder.

Thus we lay with the world, in the same darkness; like the rock buried beneath the surface of the earth: no ray of heaven illumined us; but, year after year rolled away, and left us the same dark, inactive, unformed mass.

While that state of things continued, we could manifestly not be applied either for use or ornament in the Church of God. Till every stone be cut and smoothed, they cannot be made to fit one another in a building: so we were unsuitable to the saints who compose the Church, and incapable of lasting union with them.

Indeed, so far from desiring union with them, we felt indifference and dislike to them: we were, as the text declares, entirely *strangers and foreigners* among them. A person who comes as a stranger into a family, can be supposed to know nothing of its regulations and economy, nor participate the affection that subsists between the different branches of it: if he discourse with them, it is with cold and distant reserve, on subjects which are uninteresting to both; and the reason is, that they know little about one another, and the persons whom they love and the things in which they have been conversant are altogether different. Thus we

were strangers to the household of God. We knew, indeed, of them as of a company of persons who were distinguished by the superior strictness of their lives; but never conceived that they formed one family, because we saw not the bond of union, nor perceived the Head under whom they were united: still less could we believe that it was a happy family, when their pursuits and employments were so different from our own. In short, we were *strangers* to the communion of saints.

And not only so, but we were *foreigners*. We had as little to do with the kingdom of God, as men in general have to do in a foreign country. We spoke another language: we were not governed by its laws: we did not acknowledge its sovereign: we submitted to none of its restrictions, and enjoyed none of its privileges: we were *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.*

But now, if we have become the servants of God, we are no more strangers and foreigners, but *fellow-citizens with the saints:* we are *come unto Mount Zion, the city of the Living God.* "Once our guilt and corruption formed an insurmountable barrier; but now having found Christ who is the only way to the Father, we have entered through the gates into the city, and become denizens of that city where light,

and beauty, and grandeur, and safety, and pleasure, meet together." We are partakers with the saints of the presence of their sovereign, participate the safety which they find in his protection, and share the happiness which they enjoy under his government. Do their eyes behold the King in his beauty?—we also have access to his palace. Is there a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God?—we also have tasted of the stream, and dwell in peaceful freedom on its banks. This is the happy state in which we are now in the kingdom of grace, before we ascend to the kingdom of glory.

But we are not only fellow-citizens of the saints, we are *of the household of God:* we compose a part of his family, as well as live the subjects of his kingdom. It were a great honour to be like the Gibeonites, only drawers of water to that house, to which king David thought it so desirable to be a door-keeper. But, *Beloved, now are we the sons of God! What manner of love* is this, says St. John, *that we should be called the sons of God?* (1 John iii. 1) yet so it is! If we have received Christ, to us hath he given *power*, or privilege, *to become the Sons of God* (John i. 12). Though we were not by natural birth the children of God, we have received a second nature—have been

brought out from the world—have entered into his house—have been adopted, and become the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. We have been introduced to all the rights of children; that is, we are made *heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ:* under Him, we all live—children of the same family—keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace—taught of God and led by his Spirit; and, forasmuch as it is promised, *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children* (Is. liv. 13), so we enjoy the peace of God in our own hearts, and among one another. Notwithstanding a few partial and temporary disorders in our intercourse with one another, we can aver that the whole Church of God, like a happy family, is preserved in harmony and order: we form one body: we are animated by one Spirit: we have one hope, one faith, one Lord: we love as brethren, united under Christ as our elder brother, and under one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all.

Now on comparing this our happy condition with our former, when we wandered to and fro as sons of the stranger; on considering what a change we have undergone in temper, disposition, and external state; on contrasting our condition in times past, with that which we

now enjoy in the Church of God—we know no similitude more aptly representing us in both these conditions, than that contained in the text. We were as stones once lying in the earth; but are now taken out and polished for a glorious building.

II. We are next to consider the FOUNDATION which supports the building formed from these materials—*Ye are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.*

The Church is not built upon the Apostles and Prophets in their personal capacity. It is not to be supposed that these men were, in their own persons, able to sustain the weight of the Church of God: for *who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?* (1 Cor. iii. 5). *Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* (1 Cor. i. 13). Paul *planted and Apollos watered;* but *neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth* (1 Cor. iii. 6, 7). There was no merit in the Apostles, which could serve for a foundation of hope to the sinner; for Peter confessed that he was a sinful man, and Paul that he was the chief of sinners: and though some may answer us that St. Peter had the keys of the kingdom of heaven given to him, it

does not appear that he was commissioned to hold them longer than while he was upon earth; for our Saviour's words are, *Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven* (Matt. xvi. 19). It cannot be said then that Peter, or any of the Apostles are, in their own persons, the support of the Church: and, indeed, how should they be? *Behold! he putteth no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust!* (Job iv. 18, 19). Nevertheless, the Scriptures have not hesitated to use, elsewhere, the same sort of language as in the passage before us: Christ said of Peter *that on this rock he would build his Church* (Matt. xvi. 18); alluding to the honour which he designed for Peter, namely, that he should be the first to preach the Gospel to the Jews, and the first also to preach it to the Gentiles: in the same manner it is said in the Revelation, that *the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb* (Rev. xxi. 14). So, in the text, the Apostles and Prophets are described as forming part of the foundation with Christ.

But the true, and indeed the only sense, in

which mere men can be said to bear part with Christ in the foundation of this spiritual building, is this—that they are inspired by God to speak with such authority, that we may depend upon their word with as much confidence as upon the words which Christ himself spake. Such were the Apostles and Prophets: they *spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;* and their words, therefore, may be as fully believed and trusted in, in matters of highest importance, as any of the sayings of Christ recorded by the Evangelists. The prophecies of Isaiah, or the Epistles of St. Paul, are of precisely the same authority in directing our faith and regulating our practice, as Christ's Charge to his Disciples or his Sermon on the Mount. In this sense, Christ, and the Prophets, and the Apostles, were, in some sort, equally the foundation of the Church; because they all declared from God, that system of Divine Truth upon which our faith and hope may rest. So far are we built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, for we have believed their testimony. What Christ, and the Prophets, and Apostles revealed, of the different parts of the plan of salvation, we have believed; and have placed our hopes upon the truth of what they have spoken.

Then how great are the privileges of believers!

—in this view only, how great are they!—even in this simple particular, that we are built upon such a foundation as the one here described. For look round the habitable globe, and observe how many millions among the Heathen, in the present day and in former ages, never heard of the Apostles and Prophets, or one word of their testimony; and how few even of those to whom the Gospel is preached ever believe or obey it: infidels abound in Christian Lands, who account the whole a cunningly-devised fable: to many, God hath sent a strong delusion that they should believe a lie— to few, hath he given repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth: the greater number of Nominal Christians go through the world, and die, without ever understanding or inquiring about those important truths, which it is such a privilege to know. But ye are, many of you, a *peculiar* people: the word of truth has not only sounded upon your ears, but God has given you grace to attend to it, and to find it the Gospel of your salvation.

But that which is the CHIEF excellency of our state is, that we not only depend upon the Word as revealing Jesus Christ, but by so doing we depend upon Jesus Christ as revealed in the Word: we are built upon that foundation, of which Jesus Christ HIMSELF is the chief

corner-stone, not Jesus Christ's Word. He is the foundation of his Church in his own Person, and not by his Word only which he spake. He is HIMSELF the chief corner-stone: he not only declared the way of God in truth, but was himself the way and the truth. In this capacity he stands alone, and bears up the pile of the spiritual building by his own strength.

Jesus Christ is the elect and precious corner-stone which God hath laid in Zion: though he is one which the builders rejected, he is laid for this purpose, that every trembling sinner who feels his own weakness and inability to stand alone before God, either on the score of merit or innate holiness, may come to it, and let all the weight of his salvation rest entirely upon it. He is permitted to depend upon the merits of Christ for his pardon and acceptance with God, and may expect to find in him all necessary grace and strength. *He, that believeth in him, shall not be confounded.* To him many have come, for he is a tried stone, and are builded together; and find him to be, not only the ground for their security, but also, as the corner-stone is in a building, the bond of their union. To him ye have come, and on him are ye built.

Then consider how peculiar is your privilege, Beloved, in this respect. Though it is contained

in the Scriptures that *other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ* (1 Cor. iii. 11); that is, no foundation on which we can safely be built except him: yet mankind are ever rearing their respective superstructures on a different foundation: some build upon the presumptuous hopes of God's mercy; expecting to see the Lord without holiness: others are raising a fair fabric on the ground of their own righteousness: others are pleasing themselves with a motley building, which they have raised on two foundations, Christ and their own works: all which may stand for a while, and make a fair shew during the momentary calm of God's forbearance; but will instantly crumble into dust, when his breath shall blow upon them. Now where so many are wrong and so few are right, how happy your lot to be in the latter number, by having found the true foundation! How great is your privilege, who have been taught to perceive that stone to be precious, which to others is *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient!* (1 Pet. ii. 8).

III. How glorious is now your condition upon this foundation, will appear when we consider, in the third place, the edifice or BUILDING itself.—*In whom the whole building*

*fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.*

The model of the glorious edifice has existed from everlasting, in the mind of its great Architect; and, in conformity to that model, the building rises.

1. Let us, first, observe the building, AS THE WORK GOES ON.

In that part of it which is already to be seen, observe how fitly each stone is suited to its place. As in the members of the human body, *if they were all one member, where were the body?* so in this building, if all the stones were equal in size, polish, and shape, where were the building? But now it is so ordered, that some shall form the broad base of a pillar, others the long shafts, others the ornamented capital: another shall be of use to turn an arch, another be a key-stone: this shall be found in the cornice, and another in the ceiling: but they all have their use, in their respective places; and other arrangements would destroy the beauty and symmetry of the building. Those *lively stones*, which are intended rather for strength than ornament, need not so much polishing; while others, which are designed for a conspicuous part in the building, suffer the strokes of God's heavy hand, and have their roughnesses worn away by affliction, because they are to become the

polished corners of the temple. Thus *unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. He gave some* to be *apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ* (Eph. iv. 7, 11, 12).

2. Having now surveyed the contrivance and arrangement of the parts of the spiritual building, mark next ITS GRADUAL GROWTH.

From the day that the first stone was laid in the superstructure at the conversion of our first parents, another and another has been added, and the building has been rising from generation to generation. Persons of all ages, sexes, and conditions, have been taken from the world, and fitted one to another in it. Young and old, rich and poor, have been added to the Church, in every different age; and though the work goes on with different degrees of rapidity at different times, God is always employed in it.

At the present moment, it is still rising: some stones are under the workmen's hand—others are fixed in their places in the Church. At this day, more than in ancient times, men of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, English, Americans, Danes, Africans, Hindoos, Hottentots, Mohawks—millions, who have never seen one another in the flesh, are yet

built up together, and united in one corner-stone, the Lord Jesus Christ! *Behold, these shall come from far; and lo, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Sinim* (Is. xlix. 12).

Thus it goes on, steadily indeed, but silently: for like that temple which was the type of it, there is *neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it* is *in building* (1 Kings vi. 7). The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; and so, though the building of this Temple is God's one great concern, and that for which he suffers the earth to stand and keeps the wheels of providence in motion, it makes little noise in the world: very few of mankind ever hear there is such a building going on.

But He, that hath built his stones in the heaven, worketh in it hitherto, and will work to the end of time; and, in future ages, out of thousands yet unborn, will increase the greatness of the structure. *The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will do this*, though its progress is slow at present. *He, the Lord, will hasten it in its time.* Swiftly shall it rise, and rear its majestic height to the praise of the glory of his grace, while the happy workmen shall gladly pursue their labour; till, at last, they shall *bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, Grace, unto it!* (Zech. iv. 7).

3. In order to describe our privileges still further, according to the design of the Holy Spirit in the text, let us ANTICIPATE THE FINISHING OF THE TEMPLE.

Suppose, then, the period arrived, when the scaffolding is struck down and the rubbish moved away: that is, suppose this earth which was the stage for its erection, now removed from beneath it, and the wicked, the refuse of mankind, cast far away out of sight. Conceive that you see nothing but the building. Lo! it stands high in view, for the admiration of the surrounding universe. *Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof: mark ye well her bulwarks: consider her palaces—that ye may tell it to the generation following* (Ps. xlviii.12,13). What is her foundation? The rock of ages! Who is her inhabitant?—her inhabitant is God! Not a flaw, not a blemish is to be seen: every stone is in its proper place; and all contributing to the beauty of the whole! No want of symmetry in the general outline and plan—nothing imperfect in the execution of each part. Behold it stands an eternal monument, to the glory of God, of his power, and wisdom, and grace! It is all bright and glorious, wherever you take your view of it — radiating in every part with the beamings of divine glory! Her light is like

unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper! It is a Temple of souls! every stone is a living soul, a blood-bought spirit! Every one is a chosen warrior, who has fought his battle in his days, and has conquered! They have come out of great tribulation to be stones for this building! Affliction gave them their polish; and the cement which unites them is love!

But while we admire its beauty, let not the suspicion arise, that any thing should happen to mar its form or impair its glory. Earthly fabrics have, indeed, every thing to fear from the effects of inclement skies: for they must all, in their turn, become like those ancient cities, where thorns come up in the palaces; nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof—where the mouldering arches and half-remaining walls shew the devastating hand of time. But our Zion hath nought to fear from time, for time ceases when her glory begins: and though she must be exposed to the storm and beating of the rain, during the dark watches of the night; yet when the morning of the resurrection cometh, it will be as clear sunshine after rain, *even a morning without clouds* (2 Sam xxiii. 4). As she shall suffer by no natural causes of dissolution, so neither shall she fall by hostile violence. It was truly said by Christ to those who spoke of the Temple at Jerusalem, how it

was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, that the day should come upon her when one stone should not be left upon another, which should not be thrown down: but it shall not be so with our spiritual temple. Even now we may ask, *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?* Even now we may look at her foundation and ask,

"What shall shake thy sure repose?"

Resting on him, she mocks the assaults of besiegers, even in her weakness: but when the day of her perfection is come, the very sound of the shoutings of her enemies can be heard no more. Satan and his agents must first break through their chains of darkness, ere they can again plant their engines against her. *In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee* (Is. liv. 14).

And now let us CLOSE our subject, in which we have set before you the privileges which belong to true believers; while we have considered the Materials of the edifice, the Foundation, and the Building itself.

1. The persons whom we have been immediately addressing are the people of God: but as it is hardly to be believed that you are all of

this number, let us, in the first part of our application, make an INQUIRY.

And, here, the question should not be, Have you ceased to associate with the world, and written down your name among those who profess to be living for another world? but, Are you really a fellow-citizen with the saints?—not merely connected with them in their passage through this world, but owned by the king of the country whither they are travelling? Do you shew that you are not mindful of the country from whence you say you are come out?—that you are not seeking it again, nor entangling yourself with its affairs?—that you are looking for a city which hath foundations; a better country, that is, a heavenly one? There is much greater reason for supposing yourselves fellow-citizens with sinners, if you are like them in your spirit, than there is for supposing yourselves fellow-citizens with the saints, because at other times you are like them.

It is further to be asked, Are you of the household of God?—are you the sons of God? If it be asked, "How can this be known?" we reply, in the words of St. Paul, *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God* (Rom. viii. 14). Are you changed from glory to glory, as by that Spirit? Do you, conscious of your high birth and inheritance of

glory, disdain to be conformed to the children of darkness? and, shewing no desire after this world nor inordinate concern about it, are you spiritually minded, and influenced by spiritual motives?

Again, have ye not only received Christ Jesus the Lord as the foundation of your hopes, but do ye so walk in him, rooted and grounded in him, established in the faith? Is your life a life of faith in him? Do you look to him for grace and strength to perform every duty? Do you seek real communion with him in secret, and are you grieved if he is absent? Do you strive to set the Lord always before you, and to frame and fashion your lives after his example? Are your souls emblems of the great temple of the Church—a holy temple in the Lord—habitations of God through the Spirit?

2. If these evidences of your being built up in Christ be in the general wanting, you must be considered as belonging to those strangers and foreigners with whom we are about, in the second place, to REMONSTRATE.

The edifice, which you have heard described, is not a castle in the air: it hath an existence more real far than any that you see: and, what is more, every man that is saved must come and be built upon it. All others will

be swept away as rubbish with the besom of destruction, and be burnt up with the earth in which they lie. Brethren, do not the glories of the edifice kindle some little desire to belong to it? Then come and prepare for it! You are not, like the rock in the quarry, free from blame if you are never separated from the earth; for nothing is wanting but your own consent. Be willing, then, to leave your natural state: put yourselves into the hands of the workman, that he may in any wise fit you for some place in the building. If it be not done here, it cannot be hereafter: for when the temple is finished, another stone cannot be inserted without destroying its beauty and strength, or building it all anew.

3. Lastly, let us CONGRATULATE those whom we can address in the Apostle's own words; those who, however weak and fearful, are making it the business of their lives to be edified in the Church of Christ.

Though you are afflicted with fightings without and fears within, and in heaviness through manifold temptations, these things are only preparing you for your place in the building: the more the stone suffers the strokes of the chisel and the hammer, the finer will be its polish: the more you are afflicted, the more conspicuous

your place in the building; and far more exceeding will be your glory. Happy, thrice happy are ye, Sons of God!—loved with an everlasting love—brought into being precisely at the time when the building had reached your destined place—separated from the world by a strong hand and stretched-out arm—and fixed immoveably in your place where you are to shine for ever and ever. *Who! O who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord? The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Israel shall dwell in safety alone: his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee! O people, saved by the Lord!* (Deut. xxxiii. 27—29).

Admire the displayed perfections—the fulfilled promises—the endearing relations of the Most High! Awake! and utter the Song of Moses and of the Lamb. Since the Lord hath brought us through fire and water to a goodly heritage—since he hath brought us out of a fearful pit, and out of the miry clay, and with tender care and unceasing love builds us up in his holy temple—let us believe his mighty works and sing his praise! Let there be a new song in our hearts and in our mouth, even praises to our God! Let our meditation of these things be sweet; and let our souls, which he hath re-

deemed, rejoice in God our only Lord! *Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things; and blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen, and Amen.*

# SERMON XVI.

## THE TREMBLING JAILER.

ACTS xvi. 29—31.

*Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*

IF there were any subject of religion in which it were pardonable for us to amuse you with speculations, or if there were any truths connected with your spiritual interests to which you might reasonably be inattentive; yet certain it is, that the truth contained in the words which we have read to you is not one of them. For here we find a question proposed of such awful magnitude, that, in comparison of it, all other inquiries sink into insignificance. It is not here asked, as in a case of great doubtfulness and uncertainty, What is the will of God and the path of duty? It is not inquired, What

is the precise nature of salvation? or, What the extent of man's power to obtain it? but simply that great critical question, with which all others of a religious nature are more or less connected, *What must I do to be saved?*

Not to anticipate any future observations which we may make on the importance of this question, let it be sufficient to observe, that if there be in man a spiritual part which survives his body—if there be a God who shall call that spirit into judgment—if there be, to say the least, a possibility of its being consigned to misery—then it becomes us, as reasonable men, to regard the subject of our text as entitled to our most attentive meditation.

The words naturally lead us to consider, first, the JAILER'S QUESTION; and, secondly, the APOSTLE'S ANSWER.

I. The circumstances which led to this QUESTION are related in the foregoing context.

Paul and Silas were now at Philippi, a city of Macedonia: not the chief city, for that was Thessalonica; but the first which they would meet with in their way from Neapolis. Here they soon met with persecution; occasioned chiefly by Paul's having cast out a spirit of divination from a damsel, who *brought her masters much gain by soothsaying*. The masters, enraged at their loss, excited the popular

clamour against the Apostles: *and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely; who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks* (vv. 22—24).

From this narrative it should seem that the jailer himself was a persecutor, as well as the instrument of persecuting malice; for the expressions of *thrusting* them, and into the *inner* prison, and of making their feet *fast* in the stocks, make it very probable that much unnecessary severity was used.

But no bodily suffering could deprive them of their inward enjoyments: these strangers intermeddled not with their joy; for when men have wreaked all their fury on the body, after that they have nothing that they can do. Neither the thick wall nor bolted gates could hinder the passage of the heavenly dove to them: they received the visits of the Comforter; and found *God their Maker, who giveth songs in the night.* At midnight, when most of their fellow-creatures were taking their repose, these Holy Apostles were prevented, by the pain of their lacerated flesh, the uneasy position of their bodies, and probably by the noisomeness

of the place, from enjoying sleep or rest. But how did they pass away the dark watches of the night?—not in sighs, but in songs; imitating therein the example of David, who, when he was overwhelmed with trouble, could say, in the confidence of hope, *In the night, his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life* (Ps. xlii. 8). *At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God*—rejoicing, with the rest of the Apostles, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the Name of Jesus. It had not often happened that the Songs of Zion were heard within the precints of a Heathen Prison; and the novelty of the sound seems to have excited no small surprise in the rest of the prisoners, for it is particularly mentioned that *the prisoners heard them.*

The prison now exhibited a most striking assemblage of remarkable circumstances. The stillness of the hour, the silent attention of the prisoners in their respective cells, the cheerful notes of divine melody in a place where the walls had hitherto echoed only with groans, must have presented a very solemn scene.

The Jailer, who was soon to become a very prominent person in the history, was now fast asleep. While the song of thanksgiving was thus ascending from the dungeon, there was one above who heard not their praises only, but

listened to the voice of their cry; and now He was about to make bare his holy arm, and to cause the lighting down of it to be seen—now God was about to say to his enemies, *Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm* (Ps. cv. 15). Suddenly the earth shook beneath the foundations of the prison—the walls of the fabric tottered, as about to tumble into ruins—the ground trembled at the touch of the Almighty's finger— the massy gates flew open, of their own accord, before God—and the bands of the prisoners no longer retained their hold in his presence. By this time, the Jailer was roused from his sleep: but seems to have felt as yet no fear with respect to his eternal salvation; for, on seeing the prison doors open, he instantly seized his sword, and was about to plunge into eternity—a sufficient proof that he was unprepared to go into it. Paul and Silas alone stood undisturbed. This awful display of Divine Power did not terrify them, because they knew that the God of Nature was their friend. Seeing the rash act which the man was about to perpetrate, Paul cried out, with a loud voice, assuring him that none of them had escaped. Then it was that he seems to have been convinced that these were servants of the Most High God; and the thoughts of the future judgment which they had been preaching, and the

consciousness of his own sins, crowded at once upon his mind. *Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling.*

The question of the Jailer seems to express three things, in each of which we shall endeavour to point out what is your duty, and shall exhort you to it. It expresses, first, a DESIRE to be informed on the way of salvation; secondly, a DETERMINATION to comply with the conditions; and, thirdly, an EARNESTNESS suited to the importance of the case.

1. You should SEEK TO BE INFORMED ABOUT THE WAY OF SALVATION.

That men do not generally make such inquiry is a melancholy fact, which we shall not have much difficulty in proving; for, wherever we have occasion to observe the crowd of men, they may be seen ranging through the world, as bees from flower to flower, examining busily into the state and nature of things, in quest of gain and science, while this question alone is forgotten: and the reason is, that they are not aware of their ignorance in this matter. They suppose, almost universally, that it is only to turn away from evil courses to a life of somewhat greater strictness, and salvation is secured; and, with these vague, confused, indistinct notions, they remain satisfied. If they be reminded of the justice of God requiring an atonement

for past sin, as well as the necessity of abstaining from sin in future, and of the necessity of regeneration, and other things of this nature—if the difficulties lying in the way of a sinner's justification be stated to them; and the apparent obstacles pointed out, whether arising from God or ourselves—they have no curiosity to know more of the truth; but, if pressed to a conviction, decline all further prosecution of the subject. We beseech you to have done with this perverse continuing in ignorance—that even if you are determined to remain in sin for some time longer (for that, in fact, is the case), you may at least have an understanding of the way of salvation—that, at some future time, when God's terrors are more powerfully in your mind, you may be at no loss to know what steps are to be taken, or what course to be followed in order to be saved.

Prudence, then, dictates the necessity which lies on all men, of at least making the simple inquiry in the text: yet prudence seems to be entirely disregarded. The Philosopher who professes to be engaged in the investigation of truth, or the Scholar who can discover new beauties in the pages of heathen classical literature by his powers of criticism, are disposed to leave this question to the consideration of vulgar minds: the Tradesman has no time for

acquainting himself accurately with the way of salvation; but leaves it to the Clergy, whose business it is to consider it: the Poor Man excuses himself from learning the way to be saved, because he has never been taught to read, or has no faculties or opportunity for learning. But to these and all other persons, we offer the forementioned arguments of prudence: for the time will come to the Scholar, when his reading must be at an end and his books put up; and then his taste and his learning and refinement will but poorly supply the want of the knowledge of the way of salvation: the time is coming to the Tradesman, when his accounts must close and his speculations be over; and then it will be of little consequence for him to know how a fortune is to be raised, if he does not know how the soul may be saved: and, to the Poor Man, the hour is hastening, when he will find it very hard to understand the nature of that Gospel, of which he learnt nothing in the course of his former life.

This, then, is plainly a duty incumbent on us as rational creatures, to make ourselves acquainted with the way in which men are to be saved.

2. Having now considered the Jailer's question in one point of view, namely, as containing an Inquiry into the Way of Salvation, we pro-

ceed to shew from it, in the second place, that there must be a DETERMINATION TO COMPLY WITH THE CONDITIONS OF SALVATION.

It is possible, nay it is very common, for men to dispute, and with no small earnestness, on certain questions which are called religious, but which have no sort of reference to themselves: for instance, they inquire, whether any of the Heathen can be saved, and in what manner; but not whether they themselves are in a state of salvation: such was the question asked by the disciples of Christ—*Lord, are there* MANY *that be saved?* But how much more wisely did the Jailer ask, *What must* I *do to be saved?*

Selfishness, in all other cases, is one of the most remarkable traits in the character of fallen man: it is obtruded upon our notice in all the dealings which we have with one another. Every question is interesting exactly in that degree in which it affects ourselves: this question, alone, we prefer to hear discussed in a general and abstracted manner; and the reason is this, that if this question come near to ourselves, we are afraid of certain painful conditions. But this was not the mind of the Jailer. When he asked, What must *I* do? he foresaw that the answer, with all its consequences, belonged to himself as much as the question did; nevertheless he did not hesitate

to put the question in this form to one, who, he knew, would keep back none of the truth. Brethren, why should you speak or think of these things only in a general way? why not apply your knowledge to a practical purpose? why not turn the edge of your arguments upon yourselves? Do you suppose that God loves you in the crowd of mankind, because you love yourself in it? and when you die will you not die alone? Then inquire, in simplicity and integrity of heart, as one who is alone with God, What must *I* do? and thus shew your readiness to comply with the conditions.

Another proof of the sincerity and willingness of the Jailer to submit to any duty that might be imposed upon him was this—that he asked, What must I DO? He therefore supposed there was something for HIM to DO; and, at the same time, his question proves that he resolved to do it. In the same manner do you ask the question: desire not to be told that you need only to believe this or that particular doctrine, and that then you may go away privileged by your orthodox creed and enjoy the world: seek not for allowances to be made to you on the score of your habits of self-indulgence; but stand ready, with the arm of resolution uplifted, to cut off the right hand, instantly, as God demands it. Do not desire

that the narrow way should be filled up, or the strait gate shut, and another path more smooth and flowery should be found for you, other than the saints have trodden: but rather consider with yourselves, that Christ has said, *Whosoever he be, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple* (Luke xiv. 33). Reason the case thus with yourselves—*What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* (Matt. viii. 36, 37).

3. Having thus confirmed your resolutions, by sound argument and reasoning founded on Scripture Truth, then say, with calm deliberation and firmness, "Only let it be made known to me what is to be done for salvation; and that, if helped from above, will *I* do."

Observe the EARNESTNESS of the Jailer. See how it is marked in every gesture. *He sprang in—and came trembling—and fell down.* See also how it is heard in every word of his quick, short, rapid question—*Sirs! what must I do to be saved?* He flew as if the earthquake had caused the ground to cleave asunder behind him—so clearly did he perceive his danger.

Must I tell you that you ought to be EARNEST?—you, men of reason, men of sense! Carelessness in the business of salvation! what

is it?—it is not folly, but madness!—it is not sleep: it is death!

To describe the earnestness with which this question should be asked, is beyond the power of words: but—to compare great things with small—look at the trembling wretch, who, having lost his footing on firm ground, is falling lower and lower, the sandy earth giving way under his feet, and he catching at every tuft of grass in his way, yet just reaching the edge of the precipice whence he will fall headlong into the roaring gulph below! Or watch the man, who, having been shipwrecked on a stormy ocean, has more than once sunk beneath the wave, but is now sinking to rise no more! hear him cry, *What shall I do to be saved?*

And do we ask for Motives to be earnest in religion, where there is every thing to call forth all the energies of the soul?—where the arguments, like the wheels of God's chariot, are so high that they are dreadful?—where the motives to impel to action or to affect the passions, are so clear, so full, so strong, as to stretch every faculty of the soul to a painful extent, and make it ready to burst its tenement and soar away?

The weapons, which God has permitted his messengers to take from the armoury of heaven, are endued with such unknown but awful

power, that they may well tremble when they use them. They have to do, not with the body of man, but the mind, the immortal spirit; and their instruments of action are suitable: they wield a sword which is *quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit* (Heb. iv. 12). Happiness or misery, in life, in death, and at the resurrection, are among the smaller motives which we can use to excite to earnestness: we may speak to you of an infinite and eternal God, who commands you to be earnest: we can point to glory everlasting as the reward, and an eternal hell as the punishment. But these topics we forbear to enlarge upon, but rather leave it to yourselves to consider what force they ought to have to rouse you and me to earnestness.

II. We shall, therefore, now pass on from the Jailer's Question to the Apostle's ANSWER.

Notwithstanding its simplicity, a great variety of answers have been given to the question in all ages. *What shall I do to be saved?*

Some say, "Do?—do nothing:" this would hardly satisfy the Jailer, or any one else who felt himself an accountable creature.

Others say, "Do?—do every thing: fear God and keep his commandments:" this would

be but an unsatisfying direction to any one who was conscious of past sin, which needed pardon; and who was also but too certain that he should still continue to offend God and break his commandments — besides that he reads, *By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified* (Gal. ii. 16).

A third description of persons would reply to the inquiring penitent in this manner—"You have been baptized, and believe, too, the truth of Christianity and the divinity of Christ; now you must take care to live in the exercise of good works." What possible relief could this give to his mind? He might be told, indeed, that, if he continued obedient, his past sins would be forgiven; that is, they shall be forgiven at the last day: but this, of course, could afford no present peace. His next concern, therefore, would be, to inquire about these good works, by which he was to obtain pardon: he would naturally ask, how much were necessary for this purpose: if they answer, "Do as much as you are able," then, if this be true, if none can be saved but those who do as much as they are able, all mankind must perish; for no one does as much as he is able. They will then explain themselves, by calling it a sincere, though imperfect obedience: to this we observe, that, since the degree of necessary obedience

is not defined, it follows, that, in a large body of baptized persons—as, for instance, all the people of Christendom—there will be all possible degrees of obedience; and, consequently, wherever the line be drawn between the righteous and the wicked, there can be but the least possible difference between the worst of the righteous and the best of the wicked; whereas, in Scripture, the terms applied to the persons on either side of the line are, Light and Darkness, Life and Death, &c: and, in the eternal state, there is a great gulf fixed between them; and they go on, diverging farther and farther from one another. Yet this System of Divinity, so contradictory to Scripture, is the favourite of the present day; and is adopted by most who are strangers to their guilt and corruption, and therefore confound Law and Gospel.

In opposition to all these errors, we glory in saying with the Apostle, to every one who knows any thing of the spirit of the trembling Jailer, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*

But, here, to prevent mistakes and anticipate objections, we must observe, that different answers have been given to this same question in other parts of the New Testament: and the reason of this is obvious; for the answers were suited to the different states of those to whom

they were given. Thus, when the publicans and soldiers asked John the Baptist what they were to do, he told them to leave off their iniquitous practices: for, in that dim dawn of the Gospel Day, it was as much as they could bear; and if they were sincere and followed his injunctions, they would then be prepared for further instructions. When the rich young man asked our Saviour what good thing he must do to inherit eternal life, he was told, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments* (Matt. xix. 17). If thou wilt enter into life, the first thing to be done is, to keep the commandments, as far as you know them. When you shew the sincerity of your heart by serving God according to your knowledge, you shall then receive further insight into the way of salvation.

It is evident, also, that the disciples themselves did not preach the way of salvation by Christ's blood during his life-time, because they did not fully understand it themselves; but only said, *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* But, at this time, the Gospel was clearly understood, and the Jailer was in a state of mind to receive the whole light of it; and, therefore, St. Paul said to him, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*

St. Paul, who spake the Word of the Lord to him, would tell him, that his fears were well founded; for that he was condemned by the law of conscience, and with all the rest of the world was guilty before God. He would, moreover, tell him that God, though One, existed in Three Persons, the Second of whom, the Son of God, had just appeared in the flesh, according to prophecy, and voluntarily suffered death for our sins, and had risen from the grave, proving his divine mission; that now, therefore, God had declared that he would freely pardon and save all those, who, convinced of their guilt and willing to turn away from sin, would plead the merits of this Saviour, and depend entirely upon him for salvation.

This Gospel we preach to you. The efficacy of Christ's atonement extends throughout all ages. You, therefore, who are asking, in the same mind as that of the Jailer, what you must do to be saved, hear the glad tidings of the Gospel—*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* Believe God's testimony concerning him, rest upon him simply for pardon and peace, and you shall be saved. He, that believeth on me, *shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life* (John v. 24). If it had been said that you shall be pardoned, it were much more than carnal

reasoners would be willing to allow; because they hold that a life spent in good works is necessary before we can be pardoned. But more than pardon is promised: it is said, *thou shalt be saved*—thou shalt not only be instantly pardoned on believing, but shalt receive from Christ his Spirit, to save thee from the power of sin and the danger of a corrupt heart, which would infallibly lead thee again to ruin; but which that Spirit shall so influence as that thou shalt never, never fall away: for this is the nature of the everlasting covenant, in which God hath promised, *I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me* (Jer. xxxii. 40).

Having now come to the close of our subject, we shall CONCLUDE with addressing three descriptions of persons: first, those who know nothing of this salvation; secondly, those who suppose that they know it, but are yet in ignorance; and, lastly, those who know it indeed.

1. To those WHO KNOW NOTHING OF THESE THINGS.

The Jailer was awakened from his sleep by an earthquake; and was compelled, by the terrors of God, to cry out, in the agony of a troubled spirit, *What must I do?* Would that

I were able to raise such a storm of terror, as effectually to alarm you! but we can only forewarn you of what will come to pass. Most of you, I fear, will go away, somewhat impressed perhaps with our subject; but, looking forward with satisfaction to the business of to-morrow or the pleasures of the next day, will expel the momentary gloom from your thoughts: but be assured concerning our words, that to-morrow, and the next day, and every day, as it brings you nearer to eternity, increases the awfulness of the warnings of God, though delivered by weak men; till, in the world to come, they shall be heard repeated by the voice of God Almighty, and fulfilled to your perdition. Then take heed, Men and Brethren, how ye hear! and believe us when we say, that if you neglect to cry for mercy now, you may expect, on your death-bed, *when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you*, that Christ will say of you, Now *they call upon me, but I will not answer: they seek me early, but they shall not find me* (Prov. i. 27, 28). While you are yet in this world, the Lord Jesus is invested in the glory of grace; and mercy and peace are the attendants of his throne: still he continues to hold out his right hand to sinners, till he shall lift it up to heaven and swear that

time shall be no more: then, not the ground shall tremble, or a single building be shaken, but the foundations of the round world shall be discovered: when its flaming walls shall give way at his rebuke, the pillars of the universe shall totter to their basis, and the whole sink into universal ruin: then you will cry, *What shall I do?* but there will be no answer—you will call to the rocks to fall on you, but they will not hear. Then stir up yourselves to the belief of these things, and flee from the wrath to come.

2. Let us address those WHO SUPPOSE THAT THEY BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, BUT ARE MISTAKEN.

To you, it appears an easy thing to believe; and yet your faith, such as it is, gives you but little pleasure, little profit. And the reason is, that you have never repented. Alas! how many professors of the Gospel are deceived in this particular! having continually heard that salvation is by faith, they adopt this doctrine as their own; but their hearts were never broken—they never fled, as for their life, to Jesus Christ: and though they thus profess to rest upon him, their lives are as unfruitful as their hearts are hard: they are sometimes assaulted with fears, which they have learnt to call unbelief; but they are only the misgivings of conscience,

warning them that they are building upon the sand. To you, then, we preach St. Peter's words, rather than St. Paul's, which he used in addressing a people very differently disposed from the Jailer—*Repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out* (Acts iii. 19). We would not presume to say these things, if they tended to discourage any of you; but we exhort you to begin again, and enter in at the strait gate.

3. We address, lastly, those WHO KNOW IN TRUTH THE SALVATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

It is said in the context, that the keeper of the prison *rejoiced, believing in God*, even that very night—he rejoiced before it was day. This would be called enthusiasm, by some who give that name to all professed assurance of pardon. It is not often that assurance is obtained so soon: but we may tell you, that, if you have now believed, you shall be saved—you are saved—*Rejoice*, therefore, *in hope of the glory of God.* Soon shall the Spirit witness with your spirit, that you are the children of God. Ere long you shall know what it is to be saved! when, amidst the wreck of a shattered world, and the dissolution of all things, you shall, like Paul and Silas in the earthquake, stand unmoved at the danger, and rise superior to the ruin.

# SERMON XVII.

## THE STATE OF NATURE.

EPHESIANS, II. 1—3.

*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

In order to preserve in our minds a constant remembrance of our union to Christ and dependance upon him, it has pleased the Holy Ghost, in the Scriptures, to represent the principal operations of grace in the heart, in terms which correspond to the different parts of Christ's work and sufferings upon earth. Thus our deliverance from sin is called, in the

Epistle to the Colossians, *the circumcision of Christ*—a *putting off* of *the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ* (Col. ii. 11). In a similar manner, according to other passages (Col. ii. and Rom. vi), we are buried with him in his baptism—crucified with him, or die with him in his death—rise with him in his resurrection—and sit with him in heaven; that is, we undergo in our hearts a change similar and equal to that which took place in Christ's bodily condition, when, after a death and burial upon earth, he ascended to another world.

This is one sense of those numerous passages of the New Testament, in which we are joined with Christ in the several parts of his covenant transactions; but is by no means the most important sense. The principal signification of them is undoubtedly this, that we are spiritually circumcised, crucified, buried, risen from sin unto righteousness, by virtue and power derived from his meritorious crucifixion and resurrection.

We cannot, at this time, examime all the passages at length; but it will be proper for us to observe the one which introduces the text.

In the preceding Chapter, St. Paul prays *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him* . . . .

*according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.* The rest of the Chapter may be considered as only the continuation of this idea, or a digression: *He* hath *raised him from the dead—and you,* too, *who were dead in trespasses and sins:* for the words, *hath he quickened,* are not in the Original. The terms of this proposition are brought together in the 5th verse, where the same idea is represented—*even when we were dead in sins,* he *hath quickened us together with Christ.*

The words contain A DELINEATION OF THE STATE OF MAN: first, as it is by NATURE; secondly, as it is by PRACTICE.

1. *Ye were dead in trespasses and sins.* We are, in our NATURAL STATE, compared to the dead.

Let us contemplate that mournful residue of human nature, A DEAD BODY. Among the useful lessons to be read from it, there is one not to be forgotten—that it is a picture of the natural condition of the human soul. This body has eyes, and feet, and the organs of a body; but it neither sees, nor hears, nor acts, nor speaks: though it is furnished with the proper instruments of action and of suffering, it wants the vital principle to make those instruments perform their functions.

So is the soul of man.

It comes into the world endued with all those faculties which are comprehended under the names of understanding, memory, and affections: man has an Understanding, that can soar to unknown heights in science, and fathom the deepest mysteries of nature—powers of reasoning, which can penetrate the most secret recesses of knowledge, and develope the greatest intricacies—comprehension of mind to embrace, at once, an almost endless variety of important subjects: he is possessed of a Memory, which can preserve the record of past experience, and former acquisitions in knowledge, to an extent of which we know not the limits: man has a Heart too—a heart that can flame with love, or rankle with hatred—that can burn with anger, or smile with complacency—a heart which can be elevated with hope, or depressed with fear—exulting with joy, or agonized with sorrow. When all these passions and powers of the soul are called into exercise, by those occasions which were intended by God to excite them, it is in its right state—it lives: this will be allowed; but how does it appear that we are dead? Can any one be at a loss to know what those occasions are? What is the appropriate object of all the faculties of the soul? can any one doubt whether the proper and peculiar employment of the Understanding be not to meditate on the

glories of that God, whose power and goodness called us into being and gave us a reasonable soul?—whether it is not appropriately exercised when it adores, in the works of the creation, the hand of the great Architect; or when it refers every event of providence to the immediate agency of that wise Governor, who sits at the helm? will any one hesitate to allow that every passion of the soul should point to God?—whether we should not love him most, who is indeed the most amiable; and fear him most, who is the most terrible in his anger?—whether we ought not to hate that most, which most he hates; and rejoice in that most, which most he approves?—and whether, though we may admire, love, fear, and rejoice in certain created things, we are not in all seasons to have all our thoughts ultimately converging to God? That this is the reasonable condition of the soul and these its appropriate employments, is perfectly obvious to any one who will reflect that God is, in fact, the All in All of the universe—that nothing exists without him—that nothing is good or beautiful without him—that nothing can give us pleasure without his agency: he pervades the universe—he surrounds it—he upholds it—he fills it! it is all his own: he does every thing in it. Is the human soul, then, designed to do any thing but for God? the Scripture, however,

summarily confirms the conclusions of our reason; for it says, *the Lord hath made all things for himself.* But does the soul of man naturally thus embrace the Deity, as the only suitable object of his Affections? do we not know that God is in none of his thoughts, instead of being in all of them? he has passions, indeed, and the sensibility of them is sometimes vivid; but the exercise of them is invariably confined to the things of this world, and never voluntarily and naturally ascends to God: set the Deity before him as an amiable, faithful, and gracious Being—such an exhibition excites no emotion in his breast—no love, no joy, no confidence: array Jehovah in his terrors before the sinner—he will shrink, but he does not relent—he fears punishment, but he does not fear God: change the theme, and tell him of the wonders of redeeming love—here is employment for his Understanding to trace the wisdom of God in the plan of redemption, and scope for the exercise of his Affections in the consideration of the love of Christ and his own interest in it—but no! nothing of this sort can gain his attention—it possesses no interest for him—he is deaf to *the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely:* strike what string you will, there is no chord in his heart that sounds in unison. What must we say of the state of that soul?—that it

is dead; for it performs no one function of spiritual life: all in it is torpid—inanimate—dead! There is a further propriety in calling the natural state of the soul by the name of death: there is in the dead body no power to return to life; neither is there in the soul any ability to attain to spiritual life, or the exercise of holy affections toward God: nay, more—there is no Will to this end—a paralytic person may have no power to use his limbs, but he may possess the desire—whereas a dead person has not even the desire—so the natural soul has no will to live again unto God. There is in the dead body no spark of life, which time or care may fan into a flame: it will remain a corpse: nothing but the power of God can raise it from the dead. In like manner there is in the natural man no latent principle of spiritual life: without a Divine Intercessor, he must ever remain as he is: no good education, or good resolutions, as they are called, will ever make him a good man, except there be a superadded principle from above—a change wrought in him by an Eternal Agent—life put into him by the Spirit of God. He is, however, not so dead, but there is an ability to commit sin; and, therefore, he is said to be *dead in trespasses and sins:* it is a life full of dead acts—a sort of dying life—a living death—a life which is all death.

This is the MORAL state of man.

No less awfully sad and dangerous in his JUDICIAL state.

By his Moral state, we mean the state of his heart, as it respects right or wrong; by his Judicial, his state before God, considered as innocent or guilty.

He is born guilty—he is a child of wrath. Antecedently to our works, or even moral agency, even in infancy, we are under the wrath of God. The account to be given of this doctrine, as we hold it, is this—that God dealt with Adam in a collective capacity, as the father of mankind; and when he became guilty, all his descendants became guilty likewise.

This being a matter of pure revelation, in which reason supplies us with few explanations, our only concern is to produce one or two of those passages of Scripture on which the truth is established. The text is immediately in point: for, that the Apostle might not be supposed to call the Ephesians *children of wrath*, on account of their being Gentiles, he includes himself and every Christian Brother in the number; for he writes thus—*Among whom we all had our conversation in times past, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* But the fullest explication of this truth will be found in Romans, ch. v. verses 12—14:

there the Apostle's argument seems to be, that, before the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai, there could be no transgression of that law; if, therefore, there be any instance of punishment, the sufferers must have been considered as guilty by some other law: but there are instances of suffering, namely, the death of infants: now no innocent person can suffer in an upright part of God's government, therefore these infants are considered as guilty; but their guilt could not have arisen from themselves, for they never committed any sin; and therefore it is the guilt of Adam imputed to them: in the succeeding verses, where St. Paul draws the line between what was lost in Adam and gained in Christ, he asserts the imputation of Adam's sin repeatedly—*through the offence of one many* are *dead—the judgment was by one to* our *condemnation—by one man's offence death reigned by one—by the offence of one judgment come upon all men to condemnation—by one man's disobedience many were made sinners* (Rom. v. 15—19).

Think of this, Brethren. What will it avail that you are harmless in your lives, while you still remain in that state of spiritual death in which you were born? If you know nothing of a transition from death unto life, a change of your hearts from sin unto holiness, you are not yet risen from the dead—you cannot see the kingdom of God.

And what are your reflections on the other passage of this text; that we are *children of wrath?* Do you believe that that wrath will one day be revealed? and that those, who neglect the appointed method of restoration, shall find that God spoke a dreadful truth, when he pronounced the primeval curse upon Adam? Take instruction of your duty, and warning of your danger, from one word of Scripture—*He, that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life;* but *he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him* (John iii.36.)

II. From this view of the natural condition of mankind, let us proceed to consider, in the second place, the PRACTICE to which it leads.

*Ye walked according to the course of this world:* that is not, "ye were murderers, thieves, adulterers;" for this can hardly be said to be the course of this world, at least we hope not: the greater number are rather outwardly decent; so that the course of this world is rather a course of outward decorum, than inconsistent with it.

The natural man, on his entrance into life, finds by far the greater part of mankind like-minded with himself; and so, first in his heart, and then in his practice, he joins the gay world of thoughtless people; and, mingling with the throng, he henceforth becomes one of their number. God has marked out one course for

him to run in his passage through the earth, and the world takes another: but he fears the world more than he fears God, and he loves the people of the world better than he loves God; and, therefore, he deliberately makes choice of the ways of the world.

We said deliberately—for there is in some, indeed, great ignorance of the consequence of joining with the world, though not sufficient to excuse them: but, in general, in the beginning of life, it is not without some checks of conscience, arising from perhaps a pious education or other causes, that he yields himself to the current of general example, and is carried down the stream.

Henceforward he adopts the same system as the people of the world: he conforms to their customs and manners, is guided by their rules, and receives their maxims as his own. All that neglect of religion which is visible in the world, is to be seen in him. That contempt of them that fear God, which is found so generally in mankind, he also feels or affects to feel. That giddy pursuit of trifles, fondness for amusements, thirst of riches or honours, which mark the people of the world, form a part of his character: he places all his happiness in bodily comfort or some fancied possession in this life, and lives as if he were never to die.

Alas! how little does he reflect, or those with whom he is joined, on their misery and danger! *This their way is their folly*, says the Psalmist: *like sheep they are laid in the grave: death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave* (Ps. xlix. 13,14). They think not that God hath said of them, that *all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world* (1 John ii. 16). So entirely wrong, and hostile to God, is the course of this world, that even the friendship of the world is enmity against God.

And the course of this world, where does it end?—the broad road, where does it terminate? With all the advantage of numbers on their side, with which they fill and throng the broad road, that road can never be any other than what Christ has declared it to be—the one which leadeth to destruction. Why should any of us, and particularly the Young, be fascinated by the pleasures which the world seem to enjoy, or be deceived by their numbers, when *hell hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure; and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it?* (Is. v. 14).

If they would see still more the wretchedness

of their state, let them hear what master they are serving. They walk according to the course of this world, *according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.* St. Paul couples these two courses together, as being synonimous; or, at least, as explanatory one of the other. They, who walk according to the world, walk according to Satan. Now when men confess that they are walking according to the world—which they will sometimes very openly acknowledge, by saying that they do as others do, that they cannot break with the world, that they have their interests in mind and must therefore not make themselves offensive by their singularity—they think not that they are saying this, in fact, that they cannot disobey Satan whom so many serve—they cannot quarrel with his servants—they cannot run the risk of losing the wages which they hope to receive from him. Such language openly expressed, or even such thoughts springing up in the mind, would startle the wickedest of men: yet such is the language of the carnal heart, as interpreted by the Word of God.

A wise enemy is not unwilling to have his power and resources undervalued and ridiculed, by one whom he hopes to make his prey; and therefore Satan, though he is *the prince of the*

*power of the air*—the head of that legion of spirits, whom the Jews supposed to inhabit the air, and to be more powerful than the rest—though he is repeatedly called by Christ *the prince of this world* (John xii. 31. xiv. 30. xvi. 11), and, by an Apostle, *the God of this world* (2 Cor. iv. 4)—not, indeed, by any other right than that of usurpation, though he is a great spirit, and one that actually is now working in the children of disobedience; that is, upon the Gentile Idolaters, whom he makes to perform their adorations to himself: yet he is well contented to hear his existence denied by enlightened men, and all the account of his agency ridiculed as tales invented to frighten children.

The humble Christian sees sufficient in the Scriptures to put him upon his guard against Satan, and is thankful that he is warned of the existence of such a foe; without which revelation, he would be at a loss to divine the origin of peculiar thoughts that unaccountably rise up in his mind.

There is *a roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour;* and his name is Satan, our adversary: and those are under his influences, who, least of all men, suspect it. They are deceived by him, who are so besotted by love of the world or attachment to their self-righteous doings, that, while they deny not the

Gospel, they perceive not the suitableness and glory of it: for it is thus written, *The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them* (2 Cor. iv. 4). They are of the Devil, who live in the practice of any known sin, or neglect of any known duty: for, *Ye are of your father the devil; and the lusts of your father ye will do: he, that committeth sin, is of the devil* (1 John iii. 8)—he is of the devil, or *according to the prince of the power of the air*—he acts from the suggestions of Satan, and in conformity to his wishes—he does that which pleases the evil spirit, that which promotes his plans and enlarges his kingdom—he does that which is after the example of Satan, which will bring him to dwell with the devil and his angels.

Are there no such characters, think you, current in the world?—no such in the present assembly? They may know themselves by this infallible mark, that they *fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind:* by this you see that those who please Satan, are identified with those who please themselves.

"Are we then always to deny ourselves?—does virtue consist in always acting contrary to our own desires?" No: it is possible that duty and inclination may coincide; especially in

those who have been long in the ways of God. But it is evident that the natural inclinations will always be either contrary to the law of God, or exceed the limits assigned by it; for the heart, where those desires find their origin, is totally depraved and corrupt: hence it is, that to fulfil the desires of the fleshly mind is sinful: thus speaks St. Paul, *The carnal mind*, that is, our natural disposition, *is enmity against God* (Rom. viii. 7); and, therefore, to fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind, is an act of enmity against God. Yet it is undeniably the practice of mankind, to please themselves: though they sometimes forego their immediate self-gratifications for the sake of future advantages, yet they will not by any means renounce what they suppose to be their temporal interests for the sake of God: they consider themselves as entirely at liberty to follow their inclinations as far as public opinions, or the laws of the land, or their own unenlightened consciences will countenance them; but they know nothing of acting from the simple motive of pleasing God. Hence, a natural man will apply his money to such purposes of luxury or sin, as may seem productive of most pleasure to himself: his time shall be squandered away in amusements, or such employments as are agreeable to himself: the language of their hearts is this, "*Who*

*is Lord over us*?—if we choose to spend what is our own in this or that manner, who is to take upon himself to call us to account for it?" Thus they forget that God is that Being, alone, in the universe, that must be pleased—that His will must be done on earth, as it is in heaven—that to consult our own inclinations instead of His commands, is an act of daring rebellion against the Sovereign of the Universe—and that all we do for God as a sort of compensation to him, while our hearts are in this state, is rejected by him with scorn. *Israel is an empty vine: he bringeth forth fruit unto himself* (Hos. x. 1).

Let a reflection or two on this subject CONCLUDE our discussion upon it.

How dreadful is the nature of sin! Adam sinned but once; yet that one offence was an offence against the commands of God: and God will have us to see, in the natural consequences of sin, how exceedingly dreadful is its nature; for from that one offence has flowed that torrent of spiritual, temporal, and eternal misery, which has deluged the world. Not to mention that it has filled the body with disease and the soul with sorrow, let it be recollected, that it has caused the countless millions of his posterity to come into the world *dead* to all the purposes of their creation, and under the curse

and wrath of Almighty God! and then, in consequence, living as might be expected; serving the world, the devil, and the flesh; given up by God *to a reprobate mind; filled with all unrighteousness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; haters of God, despiteful, proud* (Rom. i. 28—30)—yea, that this life of sin belongs to all natural men without any exception; for even an Apostle includes himself in the number, *We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another* (Titus iii. 3)—that nothing was found of sufficient efficacy to deliver men from this condition, but the blood and agony of God's own Son—and that those who reject this, do, by following the natural course of things, thereby plunge themselves into everlasting perdition.

Oh, who would not tremble at the commission of that, which is thus surcharged with infinite mischiefs and woes! Who would not fear to disobey that holy Lord God, who, for one offence of man, does in justice bring down such awful marks of His wrath on him and his posterity!

Since, however, his love and mercy have provided a way of recovery, how important it is, that we should both begin to seek our salvation,

and should seek it in the right way! Let us beware of imagining that it is only becoming a little more strict in our duties: there must be a very powerful and universal change on the heart and sentiments, resembling a resurrection from the dead, or else the Scriptures aver a vain exaggeration.

Again, if you ever begin this great work, take those words of the text as a test and criterion of your state, namely, the walking *according to the course of this world.* Though your not walking in that course will not necessarily prove your sincerity, the walking according to the course of this world will certainly evidence your insincerity: for this passage will then identify you with those who are dead in sins; who are fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and continue the children of wrath.

Let me, then, once more warn you all, that to be like the generality of men is to be in a state of death, a state in which ruin is silently working; and that whenever the time may be that you shall serve God, or in whatever place, you will begin to differ widely from the people around you. Singularity is unavoidable; and if it be a cross, it must be taken up. Happy and holy is he, who hath part in this spiritual

resurrection! no more a slave to custom and public opinion, he begins to act for himself according to the dictates of reason and religion, and rises into the glorious liberty of the children of God!

# SERMON XVIII.

## THE STATE OF GRACE.

EPHES. II. 4—7.

*God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that, in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

In the dispensation of mercy which God has made for the recovery of mankind, it appears, according to his revelation of it, that though each of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity has been graciously pleased to undertake a distinct and separate part in it, yet all of them are equally glorified by the execution of the plan. The love displayed in it is the love of each Per-

son of the Godhead, and the success of it in the conversion of a sinner redounds to the everlasting glory of them all.

Hence, when we behold the Father maintaining the rights of the Deity and the strictness of his laws, and wearing an aspect of severe justice, we are not to imagine that he was drawn with reluctance to be gracious, or that the salvation of sinners was extorted from him; for it was owing to the great love of the Father, that the Son was given to be the Saviour of the world: *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son* (John iii. 16); *and God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.*

We shall endeavour, from these words, to shew, first, THE NATURE OF THAT SALVATION WHICH GOD WORKS IN US; next, THE ORIGINAL SOURCE OF IT; and, lastly, THE FINAL END OR PURPOSE OF IT.

I. The NATURE of that salvation which God works in us.

Having on the preceding Sabbath shewn, from the former words of this Chapter, into what state we had brought ourselves, let us now see what God has done for us.

1. Let us not suppose that the great salvation

which is wrought in the people of God is a name, or a profession, an external washing; or that it consists in saying *Lord, Lord;* or in being free from vice—or, on the other hand, in pronouncing the "shibboleth" of a party; or in having clear views of the way of grace: but it is A RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. You *hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. God, when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together.* It is, therefore, a great and happy change! and if it is described as experienced by all, the description of it is addressed to all; for what God hath done for any, he is willing to do for all.

The change of heart, of which we must sooner or later be the subjects if we would enter into the kingdom, is likened, we see, to A RISING OF THE DEAD. Touched by the finger of God, the soul awakes from its sleep, quits its grave of sin and death, and rises into life and liberty — spiritual objects assume a new appearance—the names of eternal things sound differently — and a new world seems unfolding to the view. The God, whom the world forget, and whose judgments are far above out of their sight, is revealed unto us: we look up, and behold: for the first time, we practically acknowledge his existence, by

seeing that he is one to be feared and loved. The Saviour of Sinners, whom the world think of no more than if he had never come to die for them, we acknowledge and embrace as a friend; and his salvation is all our hope and all our desire. We are awakened to see that heaven and hell are no dream—that religion, which teaches how to escape the one and obtain the other, is something to be thought of —that the offers of the Gospel must be seized with eagerness; for that the world is passing swiftly away, time is carrying us down the stream, and an unknown eternity is at hand! Thus we are quickened into the reasonable life of seeing things as they are; and not carried out into wild fancies about unreal things.

When one born blind receives his sight, the visible creation seems to have just started into being, all is so new; and yet all things are so as they were from the beginning—the change is in him: so when the soul is quickened into spiritual life, we see, and see with wonder, a meaning and force and power in divine things, as if they were all just discovered to mankind; whereas we cannot but acknowledge that the same objects were presented to us before. But the fact is, that, till we were quickened by God, we had no sense that could be suitably affected by eternal things. They were spread

abroad before us, but we looked at them, as at a picture which is looked at a few minutes and then forgotten: they had no hold upon us —they made no impression— they scarcely appeared real — and sometimes we doubted whether they had any existence. But we are now quickened to feel those things to be true, which before we only thought to be so.

This capability of being influenced by invisible things is immediately followed by suitable action. Life discovers itself by motion and activity; and, accordingly, as soon as God has quickened the soul and raised it from the dead, it begins to move and act for God. We were very active before; but it was in the service of sin and Satan. We did nothing for God; but now, raised up by his mercy, we devote ourselves entirely to him: we desire to live, breathe, speak, move, and act only for him: our time, money, all, are given to him. The sanctifying agency of God the Spirit within us, is that which our eye is daily fixed upon: the extension of God's kingdom without us, is a constant and delightful subject of our thoughts and prayers: the expectation of the day when we shall be with God is kept in view. In short, by this spiritual resurrection, a new turn is given to our characters: our lives and tempers, our hopes and fears, our favourite

company and subjects of conversation, our employment and recreations, the regulation of our families and education of children—all shew that the new life into which we are quickened, is truly a resurrection by divine power, because it is a life of activity for God.

He *hath quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together.* It is through the death and resurrection of the Blessed Son of God in our nature, that there is now a free scope for the exercise of the Father's mercy; so that when we are dead in sins, he can, consistently with his attributes of justice and truth, raise us from our sinful state: for Christ having died for our sins and risen again for our justification, and thus having completed the whole work, he obtained the fulness of the Spirit, who should work the mighty change in the hearts of sinners. And that Holy Agent always likens our conversion to the death and resurrection of Christ, from which it originates: *Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life: for if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no*

*more; death hath no more dominion over him* (Rom. vi. 4, 5, 8, 9).

2. These expressions lead our minds to reflect on another benefit which we receive in Christ, referred to also in the text, which it were well for us if we retained more steadily in view: that is, the glorious RESURRECTION OF THE BODY at the Last Day, as well as the spiritual resurrection of the soul; for *if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you* (Rom. viii. 11). It is He, *who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body* (Phil. iii. 21). *I am the resurrection and the life*, saith the Lord: *he, that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?* (John xi. 25, 26). It is a fearful question which nature asks—"What shall become of me when I go hence? and what shall become of this bodily frame in the final wreck of elements?" Christ silences all fears: *This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that, of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing; but should raise it up again at the Last Day* (John vi. 39)—manifestly referring to the body.

3. Let us prolong our views; and consider,

that, besides this spiritual and literal resurrection accomplished in the saints through Christ, there is a mystical and a literal ASCENSION with him into heaven: He *hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

The soul of a believer is already in heaven, by faith and contemplation. Heavenly-mindedness is a rare and precious grace—the privilege of all saints; but found, in its purity, with few. It is to disregard the world, and the things of it—to be comparatively unconcerned about our lot in it, whether prosperous or adverse—to look on heaven as our home—to have a taste for its joys, and sometimes a prelibation or foretaste of them—in fine, to fulfil such scriptural directions as these, *Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God: set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth* (Matt. vi. 20, 21. Phil. iii. 20. Col. iii. 1, 2).

Happy is the man who is living in these delightful exercises! Walking in the light even as God is in the light; surely he shall enjoy *fellowship with the Father and with his Son*

*Jesus Christ* (1 John i. 7). A holy calm shall be diffused over his breast, and all heaven descend into his soul, while he walks in secret with God: through Christ, we have access to the Father by the Spirit. But joys like these require a diligent keeping of the heart, and the Spirit must have witnessed with our spirits that we are the children of God: yet if we do not participate them, it is not in God, but in us; for he *hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead* (1 Pet. i. 3).

It is his will that we should sit in heavenly places now; and, hereafter, when our life of faith on earth is closed, it is determined by our God that the portals of heaven shall be thrown open to us, and we shall enter and sit down with Christ. Having *washed* our *robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,* we shall be *before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple* (Rev. vii. 14, 15). The fight fought, the course finished, the work wrought—we go to sit down with Christ, and enjoy a perpetual rest, a sabbath of heavenly joys. Having followed him in the regeneration, even the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, it is the corresponding recompense of grace that we sit down with him on his throne. In heavenly places is a seat prepared for the saints—

in mansions of light, where the King of Kings sits for ever enthroned; and there we shall behold his glory! *Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me* (John xvii. 24).

II. The possession of so much happiness on earth and so much glory in heaven presupposes, perhaps, a powerfully meritorious claim in ourselves upon the favour of God who hath been so bounteous. How far this surmise is from being agreeable to truth will be seen, while we investigate the original and MOVING CAUSE of God's gracious proceedings. *The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God;* but *they are all gone aside: there is none that doeth good, no not one* (Ps. xiv. 2, 3). He saw their state and pitied it. He saw them sunk in the deepest abyss of misery, while they themselves were unconscious of it; and hurrying with mad precipitance to eternal woes, while they themselves laughed at the ruin which was ripening for them. His bowels of compassion were moved, because he foresaw that they must fall a sacrifice to his justice, unless some one interposed to screen and rescue them; and, none being adequate to

this work but his Own Son, *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,* spared not even Him, but gave HIM up for us all.

In those who were thus the objects of his compassion, there was no manner of cause existing why aught should be done for them. It is impossible to assign any one circumstance in the condition of man, that made him more the deserving subject of a Saviour's dispensation than the fallen angels. There is a total absence of all worthiness and of all extenuating considerations in his case; and, on the other hand, an absolute fitness between his demerit and the eternal misery connected with it. The sufferings of a fellow-creature excite our compassion, often because they have arisen from casualty, or have been occasioned by the misconduct of others; but there is nothing resembling this in the case of mankind before God. They only *eat of the fruit of their own way, and* are *filled with their own devices* (Prov. i. 31). There was no desire in man for obtaining mercy; for the state of his mind is thus expressed, *dead in trespasses and sins*—insensible, ignorant, and unconcerned whether God even made a revelation of himself or no.

Man was, however, not so inanimate, but he could be active in sin: his life is a life spent in

sin. Was it to be expected that the Sovereign of the Universe should be favourable to persons, who added to the guilt of inactivity the provocation of active rebellion? Was God obliged to it, on the score of his own happiness or glory? Must he not for ever dwell embosomed in repose, unchangeably happy in his own perfections; whether the universe of creatures continue as he created them, or chuse to destroy their happiness by sin? Would aught be subtracted from his glory, if the world had perished? or rather, if it had so perished, while the earth with her guilty millions sank in the flame would not the great archangels have praised God and said, *Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy* (Rev. xv. 4). And could he not call forth another universe into being, with the same ease as he created this, if the mean and polluted earth had been consigned to its fate? Truly he could.

Then what name shall we give to that attribute of our God, which moved him to commisserate and save? It is not Goodness, but *mercy*. Goodness may be exercised toward the innocent, but Mercy respects only the guilty. Goodness is conformable to the established laws of the universe, and a well-known and acknowledged attribute of God; but Mercy,

Mercy like this, is a departure from regulated laws, in order to produce a phenomenon of love: it is an interruption of natural consequences: it is a reversion of the current of things, to bring forth to the world a miracle: or, rather, it should be called goodness passing its usual limits; the excess, the exuberance, the overflowings of love—love prolonged and extended to a boundless infinity and eternity—love expanded to a breadth, and length, and depth, and height, which leave us unable to follow it!

It would be desirable to illustrate the nature of Grace, by adducing an instance of it among men, if such instances existed; but they do not—at least so as to afford an adequate representation of the grace of God in the recovery of the world. If a king, out of pure goodness of heart, and not from fear or selfish motives, should give free pardon to a traitor who had sought his life, and not only so but heap favours and honours upon him; and, in order to this, should give one of his own family to be disgraced and executed in his place—this might, perhaps, shadow forth faintly what God has done for us. For herein is to be seen the singularity of God's mercy, that whereas, *peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die* (and well is this premised with *peradven-*

*ture*) *God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us* (Rom. v. 7, 8).

If, from the general contemplation of the divine proceedings toward man, we descend to our individual experience of his grace upon our hearts, all of us, who have received it in truth, unanimously concur in this confession—"It was because God is rich in mercy, that he quickened us together with Christ:" for we may ask of ourselves, "Did self, uncontrolled from above, ever make one movement toward God, and not always from him? Even when the shades of darkness began to disperse, and God, by means of our consciences, had a hold upon our fears, were we not still strongly reluctant to our duty? Why are we saved, and others left to perish? Why are we distinguished from relatives similar to us in disposition—from the world, equal to us in goodness—from the spirits in prison, inferior to us, many of them, in guilt? Shall we basely arrogate the praise that does not belong to us? Shall we take the glory from God and give it to ourselves?" No, no! *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake* (Ps. cxv. 1). *Speak not in thine heart, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess*

*this land....not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess the land* (Deut. ix. 4, 5). *Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?* (1 Cor. iv. 7). You will not fail to acknowledge, Brethren in Christ, that it is all of God. Only *through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us.*

And observe how the rapid parenthesis of the Apostle, in the text, is interposed to confirm what is asserted in the beginning of the sentence: as if it were not sufficient to have said, that *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ*; he suddenly suspends his words, and adds, *by grace ye are saved*— "Whatever else I am about to say, remember this, that *by grace ye are saved!* If you hear the way of salvation enlarged upon, remember it comes to this, *by grace are ye saved!* If precepts are inculcated, or dangers laid open, or rewards promised, or trials experienced, let not this be forgotten, that *by grace ye are saved!*" Though we be holy, then, even as the Apostles, we must join them in saying, *We believe, that, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they*, the Gentiles (Acts

xv. 7)—that we must be *justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus* (Rom. iii. 24)—that *being justified by his grace, we shall be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life* (Tit. iii. 7).

III. If there are any who withhold their consent to this, they should beware of defeating, according to their ability, the FINAL END which we said God proposed in the work of salvation, which is his own glory. He *hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places,* that, *in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

If the kindness of God toward us is designed to display, as it is with peculiar glory, the exceeding riches of the grace of an unfathomable Deity through all the ages to come, even through all the ages of eternity, there must be something, I should suppose, either inexplicably grand in the work of God itself, or something inconceivably desperate in the state of man, the subject of it, so as far to exceed the grasp of a created mind.

"God hath quickened us," says St. Paul: that is, "you Ephesians"—who were iniquitous even to a proverb; indeed, like the Heathen now, as bad as they could be—"and me a Jew,

of irreproachable character"—both equally needed conversion we see: "He hath converted us both, that, in after-ages, he might shew to the world; first by my example, that there is not a heart so hardened in pride and self-righteousness that the riches of God's grace cannot pardon and humble it"—Hear his own confession, *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting* (1 Tim. i. 15, 16)—"and you, wicked Ephesians, hath he converted, and committed the account of it to writing, and left it upon record, and handed it down to posterity, that sinners, in all after-ages *may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.*" (Is. xli. 20).

God wills that sinners of the deepest stain should be told of this, and should be encouraged to hope and pray for conversion and forgiveness: therefore, there is not a creature living, not even the long-forsaken and degraded Heathen, for whom there is not in the heart of

God an inexhaustible depth of riches of kindness and love.

Oh, *who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage!* (Micah vii. 18). Let this be our song! Let the Lord see that we sinners in these latter ages have, according to his intention, seen the exceeding riches of his grace, and do ardently long to praise him. *Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious; long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth* (Ps. lxxxvi. 15). Let us stand with Moses and listen, while the Lord descends in the cloud and proclaims his name—*The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin* (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7).

This will be the burden of our song in another world; for, in the ages which are to come, when time shall be no longer, God has designed to shew the exceeding riches of his grace. The place which is reserved for us in heaven might have been filled with new orders of angels: but God has willed that the vault of heaven should resound with the Hallelujahs of redeemed souls—souls once lost, but now found; once dead, but now quickened; perish-

ing, but now saved; he has shewn to the universe examples of his goodness in all his other proceedings—his works of providence and creation: but now, to delight the minds of his angels and unfold more of his perfections, he will open to them more of the mysteries of his boundless love, by letting them see how the power of his mercy and love, operating by his Son Christ, can elevate souls from the dregs of sin, the abyss of guilt, to be equal to the angels—how it can make them worthy, in the worthiness of Jesus, and meet, by the in-dwelling of the Spirit, to partake of the inheritance of angels; nay, even to sit down with the Son of God on his throne.

This display of Love will be the theme of endless contemplation and endless praise; and the Angels, who never stained their robes, and Sinners, who have washed them white in the blood of the Lamb, shall, with one heart and one song of admiration and gratitude, join in casting their crowns before the throne, and saying, *Worthy is the Lamb! Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!* (Rev. v. 12. vii. 10).

Amidst all our joys, one might almost think that one of the first reflections which we shall make on our arrival there will be—"What

degrading thoughts have we hitherto entertained of this God of Love!"

Let this be a concluding reflection, subjoined to what we have been saying—"What a low and mean opinion do we habitually maintain of the Blessed God!" We have been hearing what God hath done for us, in quickening and raising us with Christ to hope and holiness, to faith and enjoyment, and that, in the most honourable and safe manner, in Christ—that when there was no call for all this from any thing in ourselves, he found a sufficient motive in his own divine tenderness and love—that he has determined that our salvation shall be so purely of grace and so full of glory, that men and angels shall be wrapt in everlasting astonishment at love so great! We have tried to say something on these things; but, as men uninspired must ever do, we spoil what we touch of God and his Love: yet still, under all the disadvantages in which it comes to us, is it not unaccountable that the Love of God should excite so little corresponding love in our hearts? How cold are we, at this moment! but yet, at other times, how proud and indifferent! Brethren, if it be unbelief that checks the flow of affection, strive by all means against it. *Be not slothful*, but *shew* all *diligence to the full*

*assurance of hope unto the end* (Heb. vi. 11, 12). From this and other subjects, gather comfort and confidence. If there be the least spiritual life in you, it came not thither by accident, but by the love wherewith he loved you—*for his great love wherewith he loved you.*

If the pure minds of the saints need to be thus stirred up by way of remembrance, what shall be said to the heedless part of the world, who, because they hear of a just and holy God, think of him with suspicion and dislike? *O righteous Father!* said Christ, *the world hath not known thee* (John xvii. 25). He, who came from the Father and was in the world, seems, in the close of his Farewell Prayer, to have summed up his reflections on mankind in these words—*O righteous Father! the world hath not known thee.* Did they but know thee, they could not but love thee! All, then, that is asked of you is this, Learn to think rightly of God: your views of all things will then be rectified: you will acquaint yourselves with him, and be at peace.

# SERMON XIX.

## CHRIST'S GRAND COMMISSION TO HIS APOSTLES.

MATTHEW, XXVIII. 18—20.

*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

It is a favourite maxim with the world, that, provided we be punctual in fulfilling the moral duties of life, it is a matter of comparative indifference what doctrines we believe. Some hold that the more mysterious articles of faith are purely speculative.

Others, indeed, there are, laying claim to the name of Christ, who take upon themselves to deny them absolutely; and assert openly, that

they may be received or rejected at pleasure. "Notions, so contrary to reason," they say, "are nowhere to be found in Scripture: they are only parts of a visionary system, raised by the superstition of the dark ages." But, of these, we take no notice at present: to heretical errors of this sort, we reserve our reply for a future part of our subject.

For the present, we rather wish to notice those persons, who will not undertake, indeed, to disprove the doctrine of the Trinity; yet think it of no importance whether it be believed: and, while they will not undertake to decide whether it be true or false, they imagine that, even on supposition of its truth, it need not be insisted on as absolutely necessary to be believed; that is, in other words, they hope, that if God should really appear at the Last Day subsisting in more Persons than one, the mistaken Unitarian shall yet find a gracious introduction to each of those two other Sacred Persons, whose worship he scoffed at and whose existence he denied. Let the impossibility of such a supposition be one argument for proving, that if the doctrine of the Trinity be true, it is not an indifferent matter whether we believe it. Let us judge of this matter in a parallel instance.

Persons, from a mistaken charity, would

fain have us persuaded that Socinianism and Atheism are venial errors; but we have the same reason for believing that Paganism and Idolatry are excusable. The same argument for proving that the worship of many Gods is hateful to Jehovah, will also prove that the worship of God in one Person is equally so: and that if the former is Idolatry, the latter is Atheism. However, we know how the Scripture decides on the subject of idolatry, notwithstanding the palliations advanced by enlightened moderns. Looking round to observe the different religions that prevail in the world, we see each worshipper performing his adorations in his own way—one offering his sacrifice to Jehovah, another to the statue of Jupiter—one prostrating himself to the sun, and another to the devil.

Now the reflections, which the Man of Reason makes, are—"All these men are, in reality, worshipping the same true God: they do not, indeed, exactly discern the proper object of their worship; but this is for want of better information: so far as they are sincere, they are all adoring the same Supreme Being, whether they call him Jehovah, Jove, or Lord."

Thus far Reason! but what says the Scripture?—That to mistake the person whom we worship is a fatal mistake—that idolatry is not a venial error, but a cursed abomination which

involves the subjects of it in everlasting perdition. *Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image* (Deut. xxvii. 15). In this instance, you see, human reasoning and Scripture are at variance.

We may thus argue from what we have said: If there be one true God, then the idolater, who does not worship him as such, perishes for not doing it. Now I ask, if there be three Persons in the Godhead, each claiming divine worship, why shall not the Unitarian, for the same reason, perish under Atheism? Why shall he not perish for only worshipping One Person in the Trinity, when he ought to have worshipped Three? He may not, peradventure, see the doctrine in Scripture; but so many do not see the Gospel itself to be true: but what then, are they excused for not believing it? Hear! *He, that believeth not, shall be damned* (Mark xvi. 16). These all perish; not because they had a defect in their understandings or their reasoning powers, but because of their proud hearts: they would not submit their reason to the Word of God, though convinced of the divinity of that Word.

We are not now proving the doctrine in question; but we beseech you to remember, that, if the doctrine of the Trinity be true, it is at the peril of our souls if we disbelieve it. One of

the direct evidences of this doctrine is found in a part of our text; and this we shall notice, in its proper place.

The words first read to you are the Farewell Charge of Christ to his Disciples, before he ascended into heaven.

We shall consider therein, first, CHRIST'S COMMAND to them; and, secondly, their ENCOURAGEMENT TO OBEY IT.

I. Christ's COMMAND: *Go ye and teach all nations; baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*

1. Formerly, during his life-time, while his work was yet confined, his commission to the Twelve was couched in this form: *Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel* (Matt. x. 5, 6).

But Jesus had now died, *not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one, the children of God that were scattered abroad* (John xi. 52).

Now, therefore, the glorious hour was arrived, in the counsels of God, when Christ was to be given as a covenant to the people, to be God's salvation to the ends of the earth. The

middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile was broken down : they who were afar off, were to be made nigh by the blood of Christ: peace was to be preached to them that were afar off, as well as to them that were nigh, that, through him, both might have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now was the dawn of the Gospel-day, when *the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel* (Eph. iii. 6). Now must the promises be fulfilled, which declared that Christ should *see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied:* therefore he had *poured out his soul unto death* (Is. liii 11, 12). Now, *instead of the thorn* must *come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar* must *come up the myrtle-tree* (Is. lv. 13;) and the time must begin, when *the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea* (Is. xi. 9. Hab. ii. 14).

*Go ye, and* TEACH ALL NATIONS, was the command.

He does not specify the particulars of what they were to teach; but blessed was the message, which they had to deliver. It was our Lord's manner to be reserved on those topics which reflected honour on himself: even on the subject of his precious death, he never enlarged much: little more than that he should *give his*

*life a ransom for many* (Matt. xx. 28). *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (John xv. 13). Instead of descanting at length on the particular subjects on which they were to preach, he rather chose to leave it to their own feelings: and they, no doubt, as sinners saved by grace, would not wait to be informed on what theme they were to dwell, nor be slow to deliver their message. They were to tarry at Jerusalem, indeed, for the promise of the Father—the gift of tongues from the Spirit: but they would not, like Jonah, flee from the presence of the Lord, when they had received his message; nor, like Moses, say, *I am not eloquent, but slow of speech, and of a slow tongue* (Exod. iv. 10)—for who could fail to be eloquent on a subject so sweet, on a theme so divine! No: they would say, having tasted that the Lord is gracious, "We have to *preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*. Does he command us to go and teach all nations? We will go and teach them that *faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners* (1 Tim. i. 15)—that *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life* (John iii. 16)—that *the Son of man came to seek and to save*

*that which was lost* (Luke xix. 10); and that all might come unto him to have life, being justified freely by his grace through faith in Christ Jesus. *Go ye, and teach all nations:* Let the great trumpet be blown, that many may come who were ready to perish.

*Teach all nations*—

> "Let all the nations know
> To earth's remotest bound,
> The year of Jubilee is come—"

—that now the price of redemption is paid down, the ransomed sinners may return home. The command was obeyed: as the angel flew through the midst of heaven, having the Everlasting Gospel to preach—and well he might fly upon such an errand—so each of these honoured servants of the Lord winged his way through the earth, one in one direction and another in another, proclaiming wherever they went the Gospel of the Grace of God. *Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia....Cretes and Arabians,* heard *them speak in* their *own tongues the wonderful works of God.* Happy is it for us, that the stream of life thus opened by Christ, and permitted by him to have free course through the earth, has flowed even to the shores of India!

Bless the Lord Jesus Christ, all ye his saints, that he ever gave this commission to his disciples, and gave them grace to obey it. Here

we are, actual and living monuments of the power of the Gospel: we have drunk of the tide of love contained in it, and find it to be indeed the Gospel of our Salvation. Had not the feet of him that brought good tidings appeared on the mountains of our island, publishing salvation and peace, we had perhaps at this moment been viewing with savage delight a dying fellow-creature, bleeding beneath the knife of the murderous Druid; whereas, behold us inclosed within the mansions of our God! On this spot, where perhaps nothing once was heard but the howling of the wolf, and the groans of men more miserable than they; behold walls, sacred to Jehovah, which ring with the choral symphonies of heaven-born saints.

2. Let us take the next thing in our text; and observe THE FORM OF INITIATION, with which the Apostles were to admit converts into the Christian communion. *Go ye, and teach all nations; baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

It is a delusion, not unknown in the present day, that some pretend to abrogate all forms, as inconsistent with the spiritual nature of Christianity; and, accordingly, the two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are dismissed from their ritual. But here you see baptism is

no invention of priests, no ceremony of human institution; but derived from an authority which none can dispute. We do not say that it is any more than "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace;" but no one, who has any regard to Christ, would dare to think slightly of an ordinance so expressly enjoined by him.

The Form of Baptism is in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; where you observe Three distinct Persons. Whatever be the exact import of this form, this is certain, that the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost are equally interested in it. According to some, it means, "Let your authority for baptizing and introducing to Christ's Church be the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:" others, explaining it as it is in the Original, say that baptizing into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, means that the baptized persons are thereby dedicated to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Whichever of these senses is the right one, or if there be any other sense more properly to be affixed to the words, it amounts to the same thing—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are equally and similarly the objects. If the Minister's commission to baptize, be the authority of the Father, it is also the authority

of the Son, and the authority of the Holy Ghost: if the person is dedicated to the Father as God, he is also dedicated to the Son as God, and to the Holy Ghost as God. How the Son and Holy Ghost should have precisely the same right to every creature as the Father, and yet not be equal to him, is impossible to describe without blasphemy. If the Three Persons are not equal, why is there no inequality pointed out in the text? God hates idolatry, and we are prone to it; yet here is a text directly tending to mislead us into it, if the Three Persons are not equal. Yet these Three are One: for we are baptized, not into the NAMES, but into the NAME—these Three Persons have but One Name. *I am Jehovah*, saith the Holy One: *that is my name* (Is. xlii. 8).

3. The concluding part of our Lord's Charge is for THE REGULATING AND GOVERNING OF HIS CHURCH in all ages. Before, we had a Form: here, then, is Discipline—*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*

A Church without discipline is in a state of no great purity: it has departed from the ancient institutions of our Lord: and it is an unfavourable symptom of the present times, that the spirit of insubordination so pervades all species of characters, religious and irreligious,

that Christian Churches are infected with it. The ministerial reproof in private, though administered with the utmost humility and lenity, is received with surprise, and often rejected with disdain. But when the Saviour commanded his disciples to teach men all things whatsoever he taught them, did not his commission extend to private admonition? did he not design, that they should exhort and rebuke with authority? was not Titus to *rebuke with all authority?* (Tit. ii. 15).

*Teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you.* Observe this, Brethren: whatever Christ commanded his disciples at first, that does he enjoin to you. When we come to the people of the world who call themselves Christians, and remind them of some self-denying precepts of the Gospel not to be found in their lives—when we ask them, "Do you know, that, according to Christ, *Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God?*" Their reply, in general, is, that that was only meant for the Heathens of those times; and it is a convenient artifice to which they have often recourse, in order to shift the burden of different duties and the necessity of an inward change from themselves. But here we learn, that all that was delivered to the disciples is extended to us.

Christ unfolded the will of God to a chosen few, that they might go abroad and explain it to the rest of us. "*What ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops* (Matt. x. 27). Have ye heard from me, that ye are to be no more of the world, than I am of the world? —then go and tell them likewise, that the *friendship of the world is enmity with God.* Have I told you, that ye are to confess me before men?—go and tell them to come out from among the world and be separate, and go forth without the camp bearing my reproach. Have I said, Ye must be born again of the Spirit?—let them know, that if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Have I commanded you to watch?—let them be warned, that *what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch!* Whatsoever I have commanded you, teach them to observe."

Think, Brethren, if the Lord Jesus had deferred the time of his coming to the present, would not he speak in the same manner to the present generation as to those of old?—would he alter his tone?—would he lower his standard?—would he countenance the present worldliness, and the dissipation of this city?—would not he bear testimony against all ranks of people?—would not he cry aloud, *Except ye repent, ye shall all perish?* (Luke xiii. 3). What

would your conduct be as a Church, if he himself were present teaching and commanding you? what would be your heavenly-mindedness, strictness and punctuality in duty, and carefulness to tread wherever you observe the footsteps of your Lord?—such, precisely, ought to be your state now; for nothing did he give his disciples, which can be applied to you, that was not intended for you.

Thus we have set before you the particulars of our Lord's Charge to the Apostles.

II. Let us now see what ENCOURAGEMENT he offered them for the fulfilment of it.

He might have concluded that they needed no Encouragement. He might have said to one of them, "Peter! much has been forgiven thee: therefore, if thou lovest much, thou wilt not hesitate to feed my sheep." *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep* (John xxi. 16). But, not leaving it to their gratitude, he encourages them in a two-fold manner; by the Declaration of his Power, and by the Promise of his Presence.

1. *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

To Christ, in his Divine character, no power could be given; because all power is neces-

sarily his, and has been so from eternity: but, in consequence of his undertaking to become the Servant of the Father for our salvation, appropriate language is used concerning him. Thus he speaks of himself as inferior to the Father; and the glory to which he ascended, as the reward of his labours: thus St. Paul speaks, in the Epistle to the Philippians, chap. ii, that Christ *took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

When Christ thus spoke of that power which was given him as Mediator, this was a stronger ground of encouragement than a mere declaration of Divine Power: for this signified, that, as Mediator and capable of receiving any thing, he was the Head and Representative of his Church, and had received this power expressly for his Church. As he had died to purchase a Church to himself, so he had power given him to order the whole system of things for the benefit of that Church. So that the Revolutions of Empires are only some of the inferior movements of the system, whereby Christ is graciously working in providence the redemption of his people.

How animating must this assurance have been to the Apostles! How cheerfully might they go forth to teach all nations, when they knew that the Lord whom they served was Lord of all the sons of men! According to Daniel's prophecy, *there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him* (Dan. vii. 14).

How suitable was our Lord's mandate! "*All power is given unto me;* therefore, go, penetrate the recesses of the wilderness, and teach your degraded fellow-creatures. *Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions.* Fear not to enter the crowded cities of men, and preach the kingdom of God. *They shall bring you before kings and rulers for my sake;* but fear not: *I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves;* but fear not the power of earth and hell, for all things are delivered into my hand: You shall be *troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.*"

And has not Christ, in all ages, with a strong hand and a stretched-out arm, fought for his Church, and brought it hitherto? How has he actually interfered for the deliverance of his

servants! Why need we mention Peter, whom an angel, sent from the Lord, liberated when bound to two soldiers; or Paul, who was delivered from the persecuting malice of those Jews who bound themselves by a great oath to kill him? You yourselves, if you belong to Christ, will recollect numberless instances in which the Lord Jesus has interposed for your deliverance, from strong temptations of Satan, and the opposition of enemies—instances which prove that all things are delivered into his hands; that he, whom you serve, is one who is *mighty to save* (Is. lxiii. 1).

2. The other ground of encouragement is contained in the remaining words of the text:—*Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

This expression, *to the end of the world,* shews that Christ was addressing not them only, but all *who should hereafter believe on him through their word.* "Though you are divided into sects and parties," says Christ, "I am with you all. I love you, though you have too little love one toward another."

God signified his presence with his Church, of old, by various external emblems; such as the pillar of cloud and fire, the shechinah, the mercy-seat, &c. These visible representations are, of course, removed from the Christian Church,

according to its more spiritual institutions; but the name of the city is still *Jehovah Shammah—The Lord is there* (Ezek. xlviii. 35). Though Christ left us for awhile to carry on our salvation for us in heaven, yet he might say, with St. Paul, Though I am absent in body, yet am I present with you in spirit. He walks in the midst of his seven golden candlesticks. He holds the stars in his right hand; and as easily as any one can lift up his hand to his eyes, and turn it in any direction so as to see all that is in it, so can the Lord examine and weigh the spirits of men. Therefore let all the Churches know, and let all of this Church know, that Christ is He that searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men.

But he is with us likewise for good: *Fear not, for I am with thee.* How marvellously did he shew himself in visible glory to Stephen, waiting to receive the soul of the holy martyr! Whenever Paul was in any great strait, immediately Christ was at hand: *Fear not Paul, thou must be brought before Cæsar* (Acts xxvii. 24)—or, *Be not afraid, for I am with thee* (Acts xviii. 10)—or, *My grace is sufficient for thee* (2 Cor. xii. 9).

Christ is a friend indeed: for when all others flee from us, He is then nearest to us. Thus St. Paul says, that, when he came before Nero,

all men forsook him; but *the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me;* and so we may generally say, in the words of the Psalmist, *In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul* (Psal. xciv. 19). His comforts are at hand when most they are needed: *Lo! I am with you alway.* Earthly friends, like summer-flies, flit round us in the sun-shine of prosperity; but who will be found to cheer our spirits in the cloudy and dark day but the Lord Jesus Christ? *I am with you alway*—not only in health and prosperity, to guard you from attachment to this world; but I am with you when you struggle with adversity, poverty, sickness, persecution, temptations, trials of every kind. I am with you in life, to guard you from danger: I am with you in death, to give you the victory.

What an encouragement must this be to the trembling disciples! They might be bold to speak the Word without fear, and to endure all things for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus, if He, who has all power in his hands, had promised to exert all that power for their protection.

Let us now conclude with two or three REFLECTIONS.

There has been, of late years, in the religious

world, a great diffusion of public spirit; I mean, a desire of imparting the blessings of the Gospel to other nations. This idea is rather beyond the comprehension of the people of the world: they think it is Enthusiasm, pursuing its object. Christianity, indeed, is good; but they would rather leave it to spread by the gradual increase of civilization. But let none of these reflections deter us from assisting, according to our capacity, in the work of evangelizing the world, while Christ's command is so clear and his promise so strong. Though many difficulties oppose the propagation of the Gospel, yet these words encourage us to hope that it shall be universally known—that the gates of hell shall never prevail against the Church—that the seed, small as a mustard seed, shall become a great tree—that the ship, though tossed with tempests and weathering many a storm, shall be guided by its pilot safely into port—that the spiritual building, though apparently hindered in its progress, shall rise at last glorious from the ruins of the world.

Let us next reflect, How insignificant are all the concerns of this world in the sight of Christ! and they ought to be so to us. He says, *Go ye into all nations and preach.* But they might say, Have not we families to provide for, and

friends to consult? Must not Peter any more cast his nets for a livelihood, or Matthew sit at the receipt of custom? The fact is, that Christ considered their ease and comfort in this world as a mere trifle; and designs to teach you thereby, that to embrace the Gospel and obey it is your great business. He says to them, Go through the world, while your short life lasts, and prepare men for that eternal world which is close upon them. One thing is needful, and that is, not the business of this world, but of the next. This world is a mere nothing, except as in reference to eternity. It is only a pageant passing by—a rivulet trickling into the boundless ocean—a school to educate us for an eternal existence—a hospital in which we are to recover from disease. May God teach my unconverted hearers this truth, that they may so number their days, that they may apply their hearts unto wisdom! They dream of lasting enjoyments on this side the grave, and of happiness beyond it; but let them collect the true state of their case from the text. You neither observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded, as the text speaks, nor is it your intention so to do: you would think it a very miserable state of restriction to be obliged to it: you are therefore not of his Church. If you are not of his Church, all this power in his hands is not FOR

you, but AGAINST you. That arm, which grasps the thunderbolt and wields all the powers of the universe, will come down with dreadful weight on your heads, except you repent. He holds the keys of death and hell: one to open the gate through which the soul passes from the body; the other, to open that gate which transmits the soul into hell. He holds these keys —and, to-night or to-morrow, he may open them for you! Now, therefore, turn to Him as a Saviour, through the influences of the Spirit; so will you be added to his Church, interested in his promises, and enjoy with the rest of his saints a happy eternity.

# SERMON XX.

## CHRISTIAN INDIA.

GALATIANS, VI. 10.

*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

It is somewhat discouraging to observe, how many of our best efforts for the benefit of mankind prove ineffectual. Money is given away in alms, and the object of our charity is afterwards found to have been not a proper one: institutions are set on foot for the instruction of the poor, many of whom use their knowledge to a mischievous purpose: measures are taken for the propagation of the Gospel, yet many of the schemes come to nothing.

What then? Are we to sit still, and not act, till we are sure of all the success that we wish for? Let us look at the husbandman: he scatters the seed: some falls by the way-side, and the birds eat it—some, where there is not earth enough, and when it grows up, is scorched,

and withers—some among thorns, which spring up and choke it: a PART only falls into good ground; and, of that part, it is but a small quantity that brings forth a hundred-fold: yet, in the hope of a harvest of some kind, he works on. So let us work—acting to the best of our judgment, and putting forth our strength; because, whatever be the success of our plans in this world, we shall not lose our reward in the next.

It is upon the certainty of a future reward, that St. Paul grounds the exhortation of the text: *In due season we shall reap, if we faint not:* therefore, *as we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men.*

This is the duty which we must first inculcate: next in order, though not in importance, is the duty of paying particular attention to the Household of Faith.

I. Of the DUTY OF DOING GOOD UNTO ALL MEN, we have heard a great deal more than enough of late years, under the name of Philanthropy, or universal benevolence.

There is certainly something imposing in the idea of an ardent charity, which, disdaining the narrow limits of personal relation, is impatient to have its energies felt at the extremities of the system. But the misfortune is, that it is but an

idea, the nature of things presenting an insurmountable barrier to its ever being realized in practice: for the world is evidently so constituted, that we cannot act upon things remote, except through the medium of that which is near: indeed, it is impossible to conceive, how any being of limited powers can act immediately upon any thing but that which is contiguous to it: our experience, at least, is entirely against the probability of the existence of such a power; every thing that we see being a system, each part of which can act only upon its neighbour. In the human frame, in the body politic, in the material world, effects are for the most part produced by a process: an impulse is given to one part, which is communicated to the rest in succession, and then comes out the result. And though this mode of operation appears tedious to those who cannot keep more than one end in view at the same moment, it is wisely appointed by God; for, in this way, all the parts of his vast system come into use in their turn, and nothing is so insignificant as that it may be dispensed with.

Such, then, being the constitution of things, it is trifling to talk about doing good to all men, if the nearer relations in which we stand to others are overlooked: and if such be all that is meant by Philanthropy, it is worse than

Bigotry. The Bigot does do good in his little circle; but the Philanthrophist, by attempting too much, does nothing.

From these observations it will be seen how properly the Apostle has qualified the precept of universal beneficence. *As we have opportunity*, let us do good unto all men. With equal accuracy is the great Christian Precept expressed — *Love thy neighbour as thyself;* since it directs to that which is really practicable in the theory of universal benevolence, and to no more. For who is our *neighbour?* every one that comes within the sphere of our action, our observation, our knowledge: all beyond are as though they were not. If there be any thing of which we form no idea, we cannot be affected with love or hatred to it.

It may be here allowed us to remark, that human systems of morality, constructed on a plan apparently more large and liberal than that of the Gospel, deserve very little attention; for what is really to the purpose in them, was found in the Gospel, long before: all the rest is most probably crude, imposed only upon inexperience; and is so far from arguing any superiority of mind, that the love of such theories rather proves a mediocrity of intellectual power: for all extremes, while they have a grandeur which captivates, are simple; on

which account minds of a narrow span comprehend them easily. Hence it is, that the young and weak are pleased with romances, where the coincidences are exact and the events extravagant. Hence, also, arise many of those struggles in states, which keep the world in perpetual agitation: for the commonalty, who will neither reason themselves nor profit by the experience of others, are ever hurrying to extremes: dissatisfied with monarchical government, they rush at once to anarchy: weary of this, they go all the way back again to slavery. Thus weak man is like the restless ocean, which is but for a moment at its proper level; or like the tremulous needle, which requires time and a steady hand, before it lies true. The same species of imbecility is apparent in all our intercourse with one another: disliking one or two parts of a person's character, we condemn him altogether —for the sake of as many good qualities, we bestow upon him unqualified praise.

To avoid extremes, is the part of wisdom. A child can lay his hand on the ends of things, but to find the middle requires reasoning. The wise will check the precipitation of the foolish—will except against sweeping changes —and, considering that nothing on earth is so bad but there is some good in it, and nothing

human so good but it has something bad in it, will perceive, that to destroy a whole system because some parts are out of order, is the way to leave us no good at all; and that to construct new ones, without noticing the possibilities of things and the state of imperfection in which we are, is only to waste time and make room for disappointment.

Happy are we in the possession of that Book of Wisdom, which marks its superiority to the flimsy productions of visionaries, by adapting itself to the circumstances of real life, and pointing out a certain and intelligible method of attaining perfection.

Let that precept of it, which, though somewhat resembling the inapplicable rule of theorists, differs widely from it in reality, be now attended to.

*Do good unto all men.* Let your charity begin at home, but do not let it end there. Do good to your family and connections; and, if you please, to your party: but, after that, look abroad. Look at the universal Church, and, forgetting its divisions, be a Catholic Christian — look at your country, and be a patriot—look at the nations of the earth, and be a philanthropist.

Against the possibility of assisting any but their friends, some will plead their penury:

the stream of their bounty is too scantily supplied to flow beyond the limits of their own ground. Be it so. May it refresh and fertilize all within! God neither requires impossibilities, nor loves disorder. On the contrary, he would have us adhere to his own arrangements; and, if we cannot do all that we would, is satisfied if we do all that we can.

To those who really have no opportunity, we do not speak—to the rest, we do. Your wealth is itself an opportunity; and unless, from the desire of aggrandizing your families, you prefer to let it accumulate at home, you have it in your power to bless many around you: you may contribute to the support of Hospitals, Schools, and other Benevolent Institutions here or at home, making the selection in favour of those which promise to be most extensively useful.

But it may be right to suggest to all, that, as the happiness of man is more connected with the state of his mind than his body, you may, by seasonable advice and consolation, do infinitely more to make him happy, than by improving his temporal circumstances. Hence those, to whom age and experience have given wisdom, should notice the young and unprotected; especially those, who, on their first arrival in this country, find themselves without

a guide. Persons who have many dependants or whose influence over others is extensive, and those who live in the neighbourhood of large bodies of men or are in the way of meeting with a variety of persons, and those who have knowledge of different languages or might easily acquire them, should remember that they perform an acceptable service to God and man, if they make use of their opportunities by communicating religious knowledge. Let them know that *he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins* (James v. 20). *They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever* (Dan. xii. 3).

Animated by the promise of these high rewards, let us be *instant in season* and *out of season*, with benevolent assiduity; watching for opportunities of doing good; and exercising our minds in considering, in what way our means may be employed with the best effect.

The intelligent Christian will perceive the advantage which accrues from the combination of strength, and will gladly embrace the opportunity of acting in conjunction with others: for the power of Associated Bodies is incalculably greater, than the aggregate of the

powers of the component parts ; because wisdom and strength are brought together in them.

On this ground, we recommend your becoming members of some of the various Associations for benevolent purposes, by which the commencement of the Nineteenth Century is distinguished. Among these, the British and Foreign Bible Society undoubtedly holds the most distinguished place; whether we consider the simplicity of the means which it uses, or the grandeur of its object.

The reasons which exist for such a Society, the specific object which it embraces, and the principles by which its operations are directed, will be best explained by their own Advertisement:—

"The reasons which call for such an Institution, chiefly refer to the prevalence of ignorance, superstition, and idolatry, over so large a portion of the world—the limited nature of the respectable Societies now in existence, and their acknowledged insufficiency to supply the demand for Bibles in the United Kingdom and Foreign Countries—and the recent attempts, which have been made on the part of Infidelity, to discredit the evidence, vilify the character, and destroy the influence of Christianity. The exclusive object of this Society is, to diffuse the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, by cir-

culating them in the different languages throughout Great Britain and Ireland; and, also, according to the extent of its funds, by promoting the printing of them in foreign languages and the distribution of them in foreign countries. The principles upon which this undertaking will be conducted, are as comprehensive as the nature of the object suggests that they should be: in the execution of the plan, it is proposed to embrace the common support of Christians at large; and to invite the concurrence of persons of every description, who profess to regard the Scripture as the proper standard of faith."

In this statement, there are two things to which it will be proper to call your attention.

The first is, that the EXCLUSIVE object of the Society is, to promote the Circulation of the Scriptures: they neither disperse Religious Tracts, nor are connected with any Missionary Society: their only wish is to put the Sacred Text within the reach of every human being. You may be assured, that they will not depart from this rule, because the very existence of the Society depends upon their adherence to it. The certainty that nothing will be given but the Bible, and that without note or comment, is the only principle upon which Christians of all denominations will unite in it, or could do so legitimately.

You will observe, secondly, that they profess to BEGIN with their native country; and to PROCEED, as their funds shall admit, to the distribution of the Scriptures in foreign lands.

The friends of the Bible Society in India, acting upon the same principle, have endeavoured to ascertain the order of the respective claims of the various classes of persons in India—claims arising from their relation to us, or their own wants.

The European Regiments, now in the country, having been already supplied with the English Scriptures, it became a duty to consider to whom next they should direct their attention.

This point was soon determined, and they feel no doubt, that the British Public in India will entirely agree with them, in considering the state of the Native Christians, as requiring immediate attention.

Their present object being of considerable magnitude, they feel themselves justified in requesting assistance; and, from a view of its obvious propriety, they have no hesitation in believing, that their countrymen will cordially co-operate with them in the execution of their plan.

Let me be allowed to exhort you to this good work, while I prosecute my subject.

II. We are commanded to do good unto all men, but especially to them who are of the HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH.

We should, indeed, be always superior to those petty prejudices and partialities, which confine and cramp the energies of many; and should imitate the grace of Him, who *maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.* (Matt. v. 45).

But we shall also be following the method of his grace, by doing good, more especially, to the *Household of Faith. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works* (Ps. cxlv. 9); but, *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob* (Ps. lxxxvii. 2). And so ought we. The Household of Faith should be our peculiar care.

The consideration of this duty we proposed to make the second part of our subject.

The *household of faith* means all those, who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and are baptized in his name. All these are one; united to one another in him, as the Lord hath said, *I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one* (John xvii. 23). In this their united capacity, they are often compared to a Body, of which Christ is the Head; sometimes to a

Building, of which he is the Foundation; but, here, to a Family, of which God is the Father.

The last representation was the most appropriate in this place; for, because we are naturally disposed to benefit our own families, it was proper to remind us that all believers in Christ are a part of the same family as ourselves. The account which we have of this family in the Word of God is, that they were once *strangers and foreigners*, but are now become *the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* They *receive the Spirit of adoption*, and are *led* by him; and, being *children* they are *heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ* (Ephes. ii. 19. Gal. iii. 26. Rom. viii. 14—17).

The individuals which compose the family are connected with one another, by bonds more indissoluble far than the tie of consanguinity. In earthly families, the father dies, and the children separate; and they are seldom cordially united, though they live together: they neither form one body, nor are animated by one spirit, nor pursue the same ends, nor correspond in taste and inclination, nor serve the same master; but, choosing each a different profession, they leave their home as fast as opportunities are afforded them, and at last seem almost to forget that they ever lived under

the same roof. Not so the Family of Faith: there, *there is one body and one spirit;* as they *are called* also *in one hope of* their *calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in* them *all* (Eph. iv. 4—6): bound thus together by every tie, are we not affectionately exclaiming with the Psalmist, *Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces! For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee?* (Psal. cxxii. 7, 8).

We will take it for granted that this is the sentiment of your hearts.

Only two things, therefore, remain to be considered: first, Where is this family to be found? and, secondly, What can be done for them?

The first question we have already answered: you need not go out of India to look for the family: they dwell in the land, and are natives of it: and the only favour which we ask for them is, the present of a BIBLE.

The Native Christians of India may be arranged, according to their languages, in four divisions:—

1. The PORTUGUESE, of whom there are about 50,000.

On the Malabar Coast alone, there are

36,000;* at Calcutta, 7000; in Ceylon, 5000. Besides these, there are settlements of Portuguese all along the coast, from Madras to Cape Comorin; and families of them are to be found in all the principal towns on the Ganges and Jumna. They are more or less mixed with the Natives; and their language has, in consequence, lost much of its purity: but there is no reason to believe that the Version of the Scriptures, in the pure Portuguese, would not be perfectly intelligible and highly acceptable to them. Copies of the Portuguese Scriptures could be procured immediately from England: and they might be put into circulation without difficulty; because here, as well as in Europe, the Roman Catholic Priests are no longer averse to the translation and dispersion of the Scriptures.†

* Adam's Religious World Displayed, Vol. i. p. 211.

† Extract of a Letter from Dr. John, dated Tranquebar, 15th November, 1809:—"The Portuguese Old and New Testament would be most acceptable, and a blessing, not only to Portuguese Protestants, but also to many Roman-Catholic Padres and Christians, at Madras, St. Thomè, Sadras, Pondicherry, Cuddalore, Porto Novo, Tranquebar, Tanjore, Manaar, Ceylon, and in short at all the other chief places, as far as Goa and Bombay. Many of the Roman Catholics are not so averse to the reading of the Bible as before, and many even request them from us." To which I add, that Antonio, a Roman-Catholic Missionary, at Boglepoor, on the Ganges, has translated the Gospels and the Acts into the dialect of the people of that district. Sebastiani, late a Missionary in Persia, has almost finished a Version of the New Testament, in Persian.

2. The next class of Christians to be noticed are those of TANJORE, who were converted to the Christian Faith, chiefly by the labours of Swartz.

They are in number about 12,000, and speak the Tamul. A Version of the Scriptures, in this language, was made long ago by Fabricius, one of the Danish Missionaries, who devoted his whole life to the work.*

These people are all Protestants: every one of them can read the Bible†: and their desire

* The excellence of his Version, is thus attested:—

Extract of a Letter from the Rev. Marmaduke Thompson, Madras. "In answer to your question, 'Did Fabricius translate and print the Old Testament, or any part of it?' I am happy to tell you, (considering his universally acknowledged talents, as a Tamul Scholar) he translated THE WHOLE. The translation was executed with the greatest care. Mr. Fabricius, having carefully prepared his translation, sent it, sheet by sheet, to the Missionaries at Cuddalore, Gericke and Hutteman, for examination and correction: from them, it passed to the Danish Missionaries, who were then numerous, and of most respectable talents; and, from them, to the Native Translator to the Danish Government; and then returned, with their notes, corrections, &c. to Mr. Fabricius, by whom it was completely revised and sent to Tranquebar to be printed, under the especial care of two Missionaries, of whom Dr. Rottler was one; and they spared, he tells me, no pains to have it executed most correctly, which it is generally thought to be. Dr. John writes me, that the late Mr. Fabricius was, in respect of the Tamul Language, superior to his cotemporary brethren, especially in writing, in which he was engaged at home, the greatest part of his life. Fabricius died at the age of 80."

† Dr. Buchanan's Letters from the Coast.

to be more fully supplied with the Scriptures, appears from a Letter sent by the Missionaries who superintend them.*

Last year, at the present season, these circumstances were stated to you; and, with a

* Extract of a Letter from Messrs. Kohloff and Horst to Mr. Brown:—"With the most lively emotion of joy and gratitude, we adore the loving-kindness and mercy of our dear Lord, who hath disposed the respected Bible Society to afford us their benign assistance for diffusing the divine light of the Holy Scriptures, among so many thousand souls, who are perishing for lack of knowledge. May the Lord crown the pious designs of that worthy Society with the most ample success, and themselves with righteousness, life, and glory everlasting!

"We are in the utmost want of Tamul Bibles; and likewise of Portuguese, though not to the same extent.

"The number of Native Protestants belonging to the Tanjore Mission alone, including the Tinnevelly District, amounts nearly to twelve thousand; none of whom (the Native Teachers excepted) has any Old Testament, and not one in two or three hundred has even the New Testament. Almost all the men, particularly to the south of Tanjore, know how to read, and are very eager after books. If only every tenth person among them had a copy of the Holy Scriptures, we should soon see the Word of Christ dwelling in them richly in all wisdom, and his saving knowledge spread among their Heathen and Popish Neighbours.

"Our Portuguese Christians are likewise in great want of Bibles.

"The Madras edition of the Tamul New Testament ought to be our standard, it being the work of that unparalleled Tamul Scholar and Poet, Mr. Fabricius; whose diction is much more classical and elegant than that of the Tranquebar Translators, though their translation is faithful enough. Mr. Fabricius was likewise an excellent Portuguese Scholar and Poet."

readiness and affection which will long be remembered, you came forward at once to assist your brethren. The donations of a few individuals were deemed sufficient to supply their immediate wants; but we are persuaded that still greater exertions would have been made, had the occasion required them. I am now authorised to inform you, that 500 Old Testaments, 400 New, and 300 Psalters, in Tamul; 200 Old Testaments, 150 New, and 500 Psalters, in Portuguese—have been purchased and distributed.*

That we may be able to render them further assistance and anticipate their future wants, a new edition of the Scriptures in Tamul should be instantly prepared, and for this nothing is

* The receipt of these is thus acknowledged by the Missionaries, Kohloff and Horst, (in a Letter dated Tanjore, 21st April, 1810), with the most fervent gratitude:—"We, and those among our Christians that have been apprised of it, acknowledge and revere the pious solicitude of your worthy Committee, for the spiritual welfare of our flocks and for the conversion of the Gentiles on the coast, which hath prompted you so liberally to dispense unto those poor Natives the invaluable treasures of the Word of God. Rest assured, Worthy Sir, that this generous contribution for relieving the spiritual wants of the Tamulers, hitherto unparalleled among the European Gentlemen in India, will be amply repaid by the acquisition of many souls to the Kingdom of Christ; and by the heavenly joy which the pious and liberal contributors will feel, when so many saints brought to Jesus by the Divine Word of Salvation, distributed to them by your Committee, shall hail them and you as the authors of their everlasting bliss."

wanting but funds. There are Tamul presses at Tranquebar and Vepery, and persons to superintend them.

3. The third class of Christians are those who speak the MALAYALIM, or Malabar.

These are, first, the Roman Catholics, in number 150,000; composed partly of converts from Heathenism, and partly of proselytes from the Syrian church!*

And, secondly, the Syrians, who retain their ancient Form of Worship. No estimate has been made of their population, but the number of their Churches is ascertained to be fifty-five. There are then, perhaps, not fewer than 200,000 Christians who use the Malabar Language.† A Translation of the Scriptures into it was undertaken, four years ago, by their Bishop, assisted by some of his Clergy; and it is presumed, that the work is going on.‡ The Four Gospels are in the Press, at Bombay; and nearly printed off.§ Syriac being formerly spoken by these

* Adam's Religious World Displayed, Vol. I. p. 211.

† Rev. Dr. Buchanan's Letters from the Coast.

‡ In Cordiner's Description of Ceylon, page 156, it is said, that all the New, and great part of the Old Testament, in Malabar, were printed and published by the Dutch Clergy, at Columbo: but by the Malabar is probably meant the Tamul.

§ The Four Gospels were submitted to the judgment of Dr. Robert Drummond, of the Presidency of Bombay, Author of the Malabar Grammar; who reported that he considered it to be a faithful version of the Sacred Original, and intelligible to the common people.

mountaineers, their Liturgy and Scriptures are in that language. "The Priests occasionally expound the Scriptures in the Malayalim to the people; but this good custom, like many others, is gradually falling into disuse. Some of the people understand the Syrian Prayers, but the Syrian Language is not used in common discourse. Some of the Elders of the Church were asked, whether they were willing to diffuse the Malayalim Scriptures, if they were aided in the expense: 'We are most willing,' they said: one of them added, 'The truth is, that in former times, all our people understood the Syriac; but, in the lapse of ages, the language of the country superseded it: a Malayalim Translation ought certainly to have been made, before now; but we have had, in later times, neither learned men nor competent means: our Three Colleges have been destroyed: and, being often left without a Bishop, Ruler, or Representative, we have suffered, from time to time, from the exactions of the Rajah's Ministers: nothing could have saved us, but the peaceful demeanor and Christian conduct of our people: as to your proposal of circulating the Scriptures in the vernacular tongue, all the Fathers of our Church will unite with me in declaring, that we will most cheerfully do it, if we have the means to effect so good a work.' One of the Elders stepped forward, and said,

'To convince you of our earnest desire to have the Bible in the Malayalim Tongue, I need only mention, that I have lately translated the Gospel of St. Matthew, for the benefit of my own children: it is often borrowed by the other families: it is not in fine language, but the people love to read it.' It was then proposed to them, that a standard translation of the Malayalim should be prepared and sent to each of the Fifty-five Churches, on condition that each Church should multiply the copies and circulate them among the people: 'We accept your offer,' said the Priests, 'with thankfulness.' One, in particular, said, 'I engage for the heads of families in this parish, that every man who can write, will be happy to make a copy of the Scriptures for his own family.'"*

It was before mentioned, that 150,000 Roman-Catholic Christians use the same language; to which it may be here added, that the Romish Bishop, the Vicar Apostolic of the Pope in India, has consented to the circulation of the Scriptures throughout his Diocese; so that there are upward of 200,000 persons who are ready to receive the Malayalim Bible.

4. We come now to the fourth and last class of Native Christians, the CINGALESE.

* Rev. Dr. Buchanan's Letters from the Coast.

In the Island of Ceylon, in the year 1801, the number of Native Schools amounted to one hundred and seventy; and the number of Native Protestant Christians exceeded 342,000. The Christians professing the religion of the Church of Rome, are supposed to be still more numerous.*

No part of India offers such encouragements to attempts at moral improvement, as Ceylon.†

The New Testament has been translated into Cingalese, and printed at Columbo at the charge of Government, for the purpose of sup-

* At Columbo, the highest ranks of Natives profess Christianity; and such of them, as have received the benefit of a good education, are more conscientious and respectable than their Heathen Neighbours. *Cordiner's Description of Ceylon.*

† The state of religion in Ceylon is very different from that of any country on the Continent of India. Here, the ancient form of worship is almost totally forgotten; and the inhabitants live in uninstructed ignorance, perfectly free both from prejudice and bigotry. They have so long wandered in darkness, that they gladly follow the least glimmerings of light. The first openings of religious knowledge are received by them with transport; and they look up with adoration, to any person who bestows pains in endeavouring to teach them. The arguments, therefore, which have been advanced against attempting to introduce Christianity amongst the more polished nations of the East, are entirely void, when applied to the uncultivated people of this Island. There is no doubt, that if ever the Government of England pay attention to this subject, the Religion of Christ will become as clearly understood and as well practised in Ceylon, as in any part of the King's dominions. *Ibid.*

plying the Natives professing Christianity. For this information, the Bible Society, from whose last Report we have obtained it, profess themselves indebted to Sir Alexander Johnstone, late Chief Justice in that Island; and, in consequence of his representation, they have determined to appropriate as much as can be spared from the expenses necessarily attending the execution of their vast plans, to promote the circulation of the Cingalese Scriptures.

But must this be suffered? Do we not blush at the offers of assistance from home, where funds are raised with such difficulty, not for want of good-will in the people but from the unexampled pressure of the times; and where also all that is raised may be employed with such effect, in benefiting the other three quarters of the globe? Asia must be OUR care; or, if not Asia, INDIA at least must look to none but us. Honour calls, as well as duty: your reputation for liberality requires, that you render their assistance unnecessary. Let us make haste, then, and anticipate their supplies; and thus prove to our friends and the world, that the Mother Country need never be ashamed of her sons in India.

What a splendid spectacle does SHE present! Standing firm amidst the overthrow of the nations, and spreading wide the shadow of

her wings for the protection of all, she finds herself at leisure, amidst the tumult of war, to form benevolent projects for the best interests of mankind. Her Generals and Admirals have caused the thunder of her power to be heard throughout the earth: now her Ministers of Religion perform their part; and endeavour to fulfil the high destinies of heaven in favour of their country. They called on their fellow-citizens to cheer the desponding nations, with the Book of the Promises of Eternal Life; and thus afford them that consolation from the prospect of a happier world, which they have little expectation of finding amidst the disasters and calamities of this. The summons was obeyed. As fast as the nature of the undertaking became understood, and was perceived to be clearly distinct from all party business and visionary project, great numbers, of all ranks in society and of all persuasions in religion, joined, with one heart and one soul, and began to impart freely to all men that which, next to the Saviour, is God's best gift to man.

The example first set by a few has produced, as you will perceive by their Report, a holy emulation through the land. Auxiliary Societies are forming from town to town, to take charge of their respective vicinities, and to aid the Parent Institution. It is now time that

we should step forward. Shall every town and hamlet in England engage in the glorious cause, and the mighty empire of India do nothing? Will not our wealth and dignity be our disgrace, if we do not employ it for God and our fellow-creatures? What plan could be proposed, so little open to objections, and so becoming our national character and religion—so simple and practicable, yet so extensively beneficial—as that of giving the Word of God to the Christian Part of our Native Subjects? Nothing of a questionable shape has been brought before you: we contend for nothing, the propriety of which can be disputed. We call you to the discharge of an acknowledged duty—the duty of being charitable to Christians. There are, as you have seen, no less than 900,000 Christians close at hand. Many of them are relapsing fast to idolatry, and are already indeed little better than Heathens:*

* At Aughoor, near Trichinopoly, there is a union of Romish Ceremonies and Pagan Superstitions. They have their rutt, or car. I examined the rutt. It is built in the usual manner, with their cables to pull it; only that, instead of the Hindoo Devices, it has got Hell and the Devils on the lower part, Heaven and the Blessed in the higher, and, above all, the Pope and Cardinals! The Priest is so ignorant, that he did not seem conscious of any impropriety in having the rutt. I asked him how many thousands of Christians attended the festival: he said generally about 10,000, which number corresponds with the Report of the Collector of the District.

At Manaar, I embarked in an open boat for Ramisseram. A storm

yet they are for ever broken off from their parent stock: they have left their castes: they cannot be received back again, and have none to whom they can look but us. Are we then to cast them back?—or, which is nearly the same, to continue to neglect them?—and thus exhibit, as we have too long done, to their Heathen and Mahomedan Neighbours, a dreadful specimen of what Christianity would do for them; for, of all the Christians whom they see, they must observe, that the greater number know nothing about their religion, and that those who have light have no love. It was truly said by St. Paul concerning him who on any pretence did not provide for his own, and especially for them of his own house, that he had *denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel* (1 Tim. v. 8). Truly, if we provide not for these, we shall be worse than the Mahomedans, who consider

A storm arose, and I went on shore at a fishing village, situated near the north-west extremity of the island Manaar. They were all Romish Christians, and I slept in their Church. The Priest was absent, and his Catechist had never heard that there was such a book as the Bible. My own boatmen were Christians, but had never heard of the Bible.

The rutt is attached to the Church of Tutycorin, as at Aughoor. The Priest told me he walked before it in procession. In the Hindoo Temples it is usual to ring bells and strike gongs, the moment the idol is unveiled. In analogy to this, bells are rung and drums beat at Tutycorin when the Virgin Mary is unveiled. —*Rev. Dr. Buchanan's Letters from the Coast.*

their proselytes as entitled to their regard: we shall be reversing the Christian Rule; and, instead of loving our enemies, shall be hating our friends.

Permit us to plead their cause: we beg that you will love and help them, as branches of your own family.

Mention not their meanness: it is yours to raise them from degradation. Despise not their inferiority, nor reproach them for their errors: they cannot get a BIBLE to read: had they been blessed with your advantages, they would have been perhaps more worthy of your respect. It has been said, with too much truth, that they scarcely deserve the name of Christians: how is it possible that it should be otherwise, without the Bible; when it is considered how little oral instruction they receive! If the Jews, with all the care that was taken of them, and the discipline to which they were subjected, could not escape the contagion to which their situation exposed them, is it to be expected that these poor people, whom any man may trample on, should? Can the unenlightened and uninformed be proof against the seductions of idolatry? The ridiculous ceremonies of the Heathen Worship, the tawdry splendor of their exhibitions, their songs and their flowers and their festivities, though exciting in

us only aversion and disgust, have a mighty importance in the mind of a feeble Indian; and always will have, till the tone of sentiment be raised. The Bible would elevate his views: and there seems no other way of doing it; for it must be recollected, that these persons have no books, as we have, to supply, in some measure, the want of the Bible—books interspersed with passages of Scripture, pointing out the way to eternal life.

"But have not they teachers?" you will ask. Yes, here and there one is to be found; but the number hardly deserves notice, when the wants of the people are considered. And how can Europe continue to send Missionaries to a population continually increasing? Besides, Missionaries have done their work: it was for them to bring the Gospel to Hindoostan, and they did it. It is now time for the converts to have their Ministers and Pastors of themselves. But men can never become qualified for the Ministry, without studying the Bible. On the other hand, there is every reason to believe, that, if they had free access to the Scriptures, some would be soon found competent to teach others. It has always been so in every country: they were first called and directed by the Missionary; and, after a little time, went on by themselves. If the Indians have not yet done

so, it is because of their peculiar circumstances: the former possessors of the country have been generally their enemies: their degradation paralyzes them. Do you make a great effort, and lift them but a little, and you will soon find that they will *awake* and *put on* their *strength:* they will *shake* themselves *from the dust* and *arise* (Is. lii. 1, 2): they will advance rapidly in knowledge, and go on without your aid.* Should we, however, be deceived in our hope of seeing them organized, and regular Pastors administering the Holy Ordinances, it is at all events impossible to believe, that the people, with the Scripture in their possession, would long remain in their present deplorable condition: they would read it in their houses: they would teach it their children: they would talk of it in the way; and men who can do this, have ceased to be contemptible.

Come then, Beloved Brethren: begin the year well. Before many more returns of the present day, you will, many of you, have left the country: if this opportunity be neglected, you will not perhaps have the satisfaction of recollecting, that you ever did any thing for the good of India. You must also reflect, and it is

* This, however, is dubious. Swartz and Gericke, as well as the Roman-Catholic Priests, were of opinion, that European Teachers would be always necessary.

a proper reflection for the beginning of the year, that death will soon put a period to your opportunities: your wealth will soon be of no use to you: therefore, while life lasts, make it the instrument of happiness to thousands.

There is no room for apprehension that you will excite a commotion. The persons for whom we plead call our Lord theirs, and hold his Word in the same veneration as we do. They will not eye with suspicion the Sacred Volume; but seize it with delight, as a book which they have often longed to see.

The undertaking, in which we urge you to engage, has nothing in the nature of it, at which any one can reasonably demur. The means of accomplishing the desired purpose are unexceptionable: the success is certain; for God himself hath declared concerning the word which goeth forth out of his mouth, that *it shall not return void: it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it* (Is. lv. 11). The frame of heaven may pass away—much more then the schemes of men: but *my words*, said Christ, *shall not pass away* (Matt. xxiv. 35).

You may also be assured of their gratitude and attachment. Even now, though they are kept at such a distance from us that they scarcely dare call us Brethren, it is a secret

satisfaction to them, that their Governors are Christians: how desirable that the attachment of these harmless people should be made of importance!* But this is a topic which it is not our province to enlarge upon: we rather exhort you to be instrumental in saving souls. While we are preaching, they are perishing: therefore, lose no time.

Let us reflect a moment upon the unhappy state of those who LIVE without a Bible, but especially of those who DIE without one. Imagine the sad situation of a sick or dying Christian, who has just heard enough of eternity to be afraid of death, and not enough of a Saviour to look beyond it with hope: he cannot call for a Bible to look for something to support him, or ask his wife or child to read him a consolatory chapter: the Bible, alas! is a treasure, which they never had the happiness to possess. Oh pity their distress! You, who have

* There was an insurrection of the Nayrs in Travancore, in the year 1806, against the Rajah. Three battalions of his Nayr Body Guards revolted, and sought to kill the British Resident; and the Rajah and the present Minister, Colonel M., fled to Cochin. The Rajah called the Christian Fishermen from the coast, to defend him against the Nayrs. They assembled at Travandram, in immense numbers, each man armed with a short bludgeon. The bowmen from the hills appeared, at the same time, in the Rajah's behalf; and the Nayrs laid down their arms and fled. About fifty of the ringleaders were seized and hanged. *Dr. Buchanan's Letters from the Coast.*

hearts to feel for the miseries of your fellow-creatures—you, who have discernment to see, that a wounded spirit is far more agonizing than any earth-begotten woes—you, who know that you too must one day die—Oh give unto him, what may comfort him in a dying hour! The Lord who loves our brethren, who gave his life for them and for you, who gave you the Bible before them, and now wills that they should receive it from you—He will reward you. *They cannot recompense* you; but you shall *be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.* The King Himself will say to you, *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

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